

Salem business district plan OKed for ballot

By Doug Ireland direland@eagletribune.com | Posted: Thursday, December 24, 2015 7:05 am

SALEM, N.H. — Voters will decide in March if the town should create a special zoning district aimed at boosting economic development and keeping young professionals from leaving New Hampshire for better jobs in Massachusetts.

The Planning Board voted 5-2 on Tuesday night to put the proposal on the town ballot following an hour-long public hearing. Four other zoning amendments were also approved for the ballot by unanimous votes.

No residents spoke on the four other amendments, but several people voiced their support of or opposition to the proposed Business Innovation Overlay District.

"Really, the purpose is to provide incentive for growth industries to come into town and for the redevelopment of existing properties," town Planning Director Ross Moldoff said.

The district, proposed off Exit 2 of Interstate 93, would allow for a mix of business, commercial, office and residential uses. The proposal was developed over the last two years by the town's nine-member Economic Development Action Committee.

The overlay district would complement zoning in the commercial-industrial district, according to interim Town Manager Leon Goodwin, who helped draft the plan with Moldoff.

It would only pertain to parcels 10 acres and larger. There are 14 such parcels in the approximately 1,400-acre area, which extends west of I-93 in Salem and between the interstate and North Policy and South Policy streets, according to Goodwin.

The Planning Board would be able to grant conditional use permits that give projects flexibility from land-use regulations. The regulations include those governing density, setbacks, lot sizes, parking requirements and building heights.

A goal of the economic development panel was to create a business and residential environment that encourages companies to move to Salem and create jobs.

Another goal was to make sure people who already live in Salem stay in town, especially young people, instead of leaving to find higher-paying jobs in Massachusetts.

Goodwin has said only about 12 percent of Salem's approximately 15,000 workers live in town. More than 50 percent of those 15,000 people are employed in Massachusetts, he said.

Committee member D.J. Bettencourt told the board that the district would encourage Salem's young workers to remain in town.

"Our children will have the ability to live in this great community and work in this great community as well," he said.

Selectman Everett McBride Jr. and committee members Wayne Pilla and Lisa Withrow, the panel's chairman, also spoke in favor of the district and urged the board to approve the proposal for the ballot.

Pilla defended the plan against criticism from opponents such as Selectman Stephen Campbell, who said the proposal was not "thought out," contained "contradictions," and permitted too much residential development when it isn't needed.

"Every square foot that goes into residential is one less square foot to bring good jobs to this town," Campbell said.

Corey Garabedian of Garabedian Properties praised the committee's work, but said more needs to be done to promote economic development in others areas of town as well, including Garabedian Drive.

Campbell and resident Martha Spalding were also concerned developers would be able to exceed the town's height limit for buildings, creating an eyesore.

"This is an argument used to stir the pot and push buttons," Pilla said of those concerns. "It's fear mongering."

Michael Lyons, the selectmen's representative to the board, said there has been a history of "fear mongering" among residents over the years when it comes to supporting major projects.

He called the proposal "2015's bogeyman."

"Don't fear it," Lyons said. "This is a good thing. Move it forward."

Board members Ronald Belanger and Paul Pelletier opposed the proposal, saying it needed more work to best serve the town's needs.

"I would rather see it more iron clad," Pelletier said.

The four other amendments called for revising the septic system setback for wetlands and also the impact fee ordinance, along with expanding nonconforming structures and allowing the noncommercial keeping of up to six chickens in the town's Rural District.

Salem backs plan to create jobs, retain workers

By Doug Ireland direland@eagletribune.com | Posted: Friday, December 11, 2015 7:15 am

SALEM, N.H. — A proposal aimed at keeping young professionals in New Hampshire by developing a new business district in town to help create jobs received strong support from selectmen.

If the zoning amendment is approved by voters in March, it would help bolster economic growth in a community looking to expand its tax base, according to selectmen and members of Salem's Economic Development Action Committee.

The Business Innovation Overlay District — proposed in the area off Exit 2 of Interstate 93 — would allow for a mix of business, commercial, office and residential uses, Assistant Town Manager Leon Goodwin said.

Goodwin and the members of economic development panel explained the plan to selectmen at their meeting earlier this week, winning the backing of most board members and New Hampshire Senate President and Salem resident Chuck Morse.

One goal of the nine-member committee is to create a business and residential environment that encourages companies and workers to move to Salem.

But they also want to make sure those who already live in town stay here, especially young people, instead of leaving to find higher-paying jobs in Massachusetts.

"We should be able to live here, work here and have fun here," committee Chairman Lisa Withrow said.

She said the proposal represents "a solid piece of the future of Salem."

Several other committee members also touted the plan, including Vice Chairman D.J. Bettencourt. They drafted the proposal after holding nearly two dozen meetings during the past two years.

The loss of highly skilled Granite State workers to jobs across the border has been a major concern of state officials in recent years, including Morse and Gov. Maggie Hassan.

"I think a lot of people are missing the point on what's going on in Salem and in the state of New Hampshire," Morse said. "You can't ask these kids to graduate from college and stay in the state if you don't give them what they are looking for to stay here."

The Senate president spoke of his 20-year-old daughter.

“We want them back — we want them to move back to Salem,” Morse said. “I am in support of this.”

Board Chairman James Keller, who works in Cambridge, agreed with Morse and said overlay districts have worked well in Salem.

“Now, we need to think of the next generation coming and keep them in Salem,” Keller said. “Let’s keep them here.”

Fellow Selectmen Everett McBride Jr., who works in Burlington, and Michael Lyons also backed the proposal.

“I support this ordinance, I absolutely support it,” McBride said. “I think we ought to move ahead on it.”

When the zoning amendment was presented to the Planning Board in October, Goodwin said only about 12 percent — or a little more than 2,400 — of the town’s approximately 15,000 workers also live in Salem.

“It has been steadily declining over the years,” he said.

But more than 50 percent of those 15,000 employees from Salem work in Massachusetts, Goodwin said.

The overlay district would complement zoning in the current commercial-industrial district as opposed to replacing it, Goodwin said.

It would also only pertain to parcels 10 acres and larger. There are 14 in the approximately 1,400-acre area, which extends west of I-93 in Salem and between the interstate and North Policy and South Policy streets, Goodwin said.

Projects would be given flexibility from land-use regulations, including those governing density, setbacks, lot sizes, parking requirements and building heights. This flexibility would be granted through conditional use permits approved by the Planning Board.

But Selectmen Patrick Hargreaves and Stephen Campbell were worried the zoning amendment would allow buildings to be at least 75 feet — more than 30 feet over what is now allowed.

“The only concern I got is the height,” Hargreaves said, explaining he didn’t want people living in “high rises” looking into other residents’ backyards.

Campbell vowed to fight the proposal, criticizing the height waiver and others that he said would disrupt the quality of life in Salem. He also spoke out against allowing housing in the district.

“I’m not fighting against the tide, but I don’t want to see Salem become Nashua and Manchester, or any place south of here,” Campbell said. “I love Salem. I’m for progress, but this is not progress. This is monster development and it will fundamentally change this town.”

Town center project unveiled in Salem

By Doug Ireland direland@eagletribune.com | Posted: Thursday, December 10, 2015 7:10 am

SALEM, N.H. — If members of the town's Planning Board had their way, work on restaurateur Joseph Faro's proposed town center project would begin immediately.

But they realize construction of the 360,000-square-foot hotel, restaurant, retail and residential development must undergo a thorough review that could take months, if not longer.

One thing is certain, though. Members of the seven-member board and Salem Planning Director Ross Moldoff said they believe this is the project that will revitalize the community.

"Everyone is very excited," selectmen's representative Michael Lyons told Faro on Tuesday night. "We would like to give you approval tonight if we could."

The board received its first look at the proposed Tuscan Village development as Faro and his design and engineering team presented conceptual plans for the project.

Faro, who owns Tuscan Kitchen restaurant and Tuscan Market on Main Street, purchased 50 acres of the 170-acre Rockingham Park racetrack property from Rockingham Venture and general manager and president Edward Callahan nearly a year ago.

Five of the 50 acres were obtained by Key Auto Group of Portsmouth for construction of Salem Ford — a proposed 36,000-square-foot car dealership also reviewed by the board Tuesday.

"We are very, very excited about the opportunity to show you the concept we have been working on at least two years," Faro said. "Tuscan Village is really a multipurpose site that actually allows you to work, play, eat and stay."

The project calls for a 150-room hotel, 128 units of multifamily housing, 80 townhouse units and at least 168,000 square feet of retail space.

The proposal also includes a 60,000-square-foot movie theater, a 45,000-square-foot bowling complex and 16,000 square feet of restaurant space to be occupied by several eateries, including a seafood establishment. There would no chain restaurants, Faro said.

Tuscan Kitchen and Tuscan Market would have to be relocated, Faro said. Food production would take place at the current Tuscan Market site while the restaurant space would be occupied by the new Tuscan Prime Chop House, he said.

There would also be what Faro called "The Gelato Zone."

The residential aspect of the project would include two-and-half and three-story luxury condominiums, according to project representative Mark Gross of MHF Consultants of Salem. Roads and accesses would be laid out to avoid excessive traffic, he said.

"We have a lot of major access points here — Exit 2, Rockingham Park Boulevard," Gross said. "We have a lot of ways for traffic to get in and out of here."

Several hundred parking spaces in multiple lots are also proposed along with a network of pedestrian walkways, some of which would lead to the town's rail trail.

The development would border South Broadway and Pleasant, Main and Central streets, where Moldoff said traffic congestion would be a major issue that must be resolved.

Faro said he hopes to begin construction in 2017 and wrap up the project by 2019. No cost estimate was disclosed.

Moldoff praised the proposal along with Faro and his team as did several board members.

Moldoff said it's the type of economic development that town planning officials and others have been waiting to see for more than two decades. But there are still many issues with the project that would have to be addressed, especially traffic, he said.

"How lucky we are to be here and have a landowner who wants to do something like this," Moldoff said. "There are a lot of issues — we will work through the issues."

Board member Paul Pelletier was especially pleased, saying the project would restore a vibrant downtown in the Depot area that has long since disappeared.

"I'm totally ecstatic," he said. "We lost our downtown. ... This is a dream come true."

Board member Robert Gibbs said he also liked the project, but hoped it would have more of a traditional "New England feel" as opposed to just modern buildings.

"It is a great plan," board member Ronald Belanger said. "I think people are going to be very happy in Salem."

Chairman Edward DeClercq agreed as did local businessman Larry Belair. "I just think it is the greatest thing that has happened to Salem," Belair said.

"It is a great plan and puts Salem back on the map," DeClercq said. "Thanks to Mr. Faro, at this point, we are way ahead of the curve — we are the curve."

Major project proposed in Salem

By Doug Ireland direland@eagletribune.com | Posted: Tuesday, December 8, 2015 7:10 am

SALEM, N.H. — What was once part of the historic Rockingham Park racetrack property may soon become an elaborate village-style town center with a hotel, stores, movie theater, bowling alley and more than 200 housing units.

It's all part of the 368,000-square-foot Tuscan Village plan proposed by restaurateur Joseph Faro that the town's Planning Board will review for the first time Tuesday night.

Several dozen dilapidated horse barns that once accommodated up to 1,600 racehorses have been razed. They will make way for a commercial and residential neighborhood with extensive pedestrian walkways, according to longtime Salem planning director Ross Moldoff.

"It's probably one of the most exciting projects we have ever seen in my time here because it is so different than anything we've ever had," Moldoff said.

"It's a downtown-style development," he added. "My sense is the community wants something very much like this. This will give people the ability to walk to stores and restaurants."

Faro, owner of the growing Tuscan Brands enterprise, obtained 50 acres of the 170-acre racetrack property from Rockingham Venture Inc. and park president and general manager Edward Callahan nearly a year ago. County records show the site sold for about \$9.6 million.

Tuscan Brands includes the popular Tuscan Market and Tuscan Kitchen restaurant on Main Street. They would be relocated to another portion of the property off Central Street.

Faro sold five acres to Key Auto Group of Portsmouth for a proposed car dealership and has been hesitant to discuss his plans for the property over the last several months until a formal plan was drafted.

Salem officials and residents have been anxiously awaiting to hear what Faro would propose at the site.

The future of Rockingham Park has been in limbo for several years amid legislative proposals calling for the legalization of casino gambling in New Hampshire. The site has been considered a possible location for a casino if legislation were passed.

Faro said in April his plans depended on whether the Legislature passed Senate Bill 113, which was later defeated.

“I don’t have a formal plan yet,” he said. “There are so many things that have to happen. ... We are in a holding pattern.”

“The Rock,” which opened in 1906, drew thousands of spectators for races until it was hit hard by the end of live racing five years ago. The venue continues to host charitable gaming and other events.

Millennium Gaming of Las Vegas has held an option to purchase the remaining 120 acres of the site to establish a multimillion-dollar casino and entertainment complex expected to create hundreds of full- and part-time jobs.

Faro could not be reached for comment Monday, but has said a hotel would likely be built regardless if lawmakers approved casino gambling.

“Whatever we come up with, it’s going to be a win-win for Salem,” he said. “The town of Salem has been great to work with.”

Before purchasing the property, Faro had discussed putting in a village-style development near the current Tuscan Market and Tuscan Kitchen buildings as part of a three-phase development plan, but nothing of the magnitude that is now proposed.

The master plan recently presented to the town shows a development with a 150-room hotel, 128 units of multifamily housing, 80 townhouse units and at least 168,000 square feet of retail space.

The proposal also calls for a 60,000-square-foot movie theater, 45-square-foot organic grocery store, 18,000-square-foot bowling alley and 16,000 square feet of restaurant space.

Of course, several hundred parking spaces in several lots are also part of the plan, but Moldoff said the proposal also calls for pedestrian areas closed to traffic.

The development would border Pleasant, Central and Main streets in addition to heavily traveled South Broadway, which has been widely criticized because of its traffic. The traffic situation would be a major factor the Planning Board would have to address, Moldoff said.

Callahan praised Faro and his proposed project.

“From what I’ve seen, it looks to be a spectacular development,” Callahan said. “I think it’s the type of development the town, the people and the area will be very pleased with.”

But Callahan also said if not for the defeat of gaming legislation, the site would have been an excellent location for a casino.

“I think the casino would have been the best use of the property in the eyes of the town and state,” he said.

Although there are no immediate plans to sell the remaining land, Callahan said there would likely be future development of the property after going “0-for-21” in passing casino legislation.

“I think you will eventually see other types of development out there,” he said.

State Sen. Lou D’Allesandro, D-Manchester, has proposed casino legislation again this session.

Faro opened his Salem business in 2010 and another location in Burlington, Mass., last year. A groundbreaking ceremony for a new Tuscan Kitchen & Market in Portsmouth is scheduled for Wednesday and a fourth location is expected to open in Boston in summer 2017.

The Planning Board meeting begins at 7 p.m. Tuesday. The board will also review plans for the 36,000-square Salem Ford site proposed by Key Auto Group.

Sal's to redevelop Salem plaza

By Doug Ireland direland@eagletribune.com | Posted: Saturday, December 5, 2015 7:11 am

SALEM, N.H. — Nearly three years after the project was first proposed, major changes may finally take place at the Sal's Pizza plaza on Route 28.

The popular Merrimack Valley pizza chain, which opened its first location 25 years ago in Salem, is reviving plans to expand its current operation at 29-39 N. Broadway.

That location, which town planning director Ross Moldoff has said opened in the late 1990s, will be demolished.

An adjacent building, occupied by Portland Glass for years and most recently home to an antique shop, will also be removed, according to project representative and engineer Eric Gerade of TEC Inc. in Lawrence.

They will be replaced by three new buildings that would house Sal's, another restaurant, offices, retail space and apartments.

But the 15,500-square-foot redevelopment project must first receive approval from the town's Planning Board, which got its first look at the latest proposal last week.

"The project is back on track now and we want to reintroduce it to the board," Gerade told the panel.

Gerade said Friday the proposal is virtually identical to the one introduced at the 1.1-acre site in March 2013 but placed on hold for almost three years.

He would not comment on why the redevelopment project was delayed before the Planning Board even got a chance to consider the final plan.



Sal's to redevelop Salem plaza

Staff file photoA major redevelopment is planned for Sal's Pizza on North Broadway in Salem, N.H. Sal's wants to tear down two buildings to build three, expanding the restaurant and making room for several other businesses and apartments.

As proposed, one restaurant would occupy a 4,050-square-foot, single-story building at one end of the plaza while the second would be in a two-story, 4,600-square-foot building that also houses office space.

The second building would be in the middle while the third structure — housing retail, office and residential space — is to be constructed at the other end of the plaza. Gerade declined to say where Sal's would be located.

The third building would be three stories and feature 6,900 square feet. Two apartments are proposed, Gerade said.

The site consists of two lots that would have to be consolidated and there would be 59 new parking spaces, he said.

The Sal's chain of more than 40 locations in several states is headquartered in Lawrence and owned by Lupoli Companies. Sal Lupoli and his brother, Nick, founded the business in 1990 in an 800-square-foot storefront in Salem.

"We feel this project will provide an exciting, new redevelopment opportunity in keeping with the Salem Depot Overlay District," Gerade said. It would also provide access to the rail trail, he said.

Moldoff told the board it would have to consider potential traffic and parking problems at the site, located in a heavily traveled area prone to lengthy traffic back-ups during rush hour.

"We are very excited about the project, but I think there are a couple of issues you have to talk about," he said. "The buildings are obviously a huge improvement over what is there now. ... That is the question, obviously, is there enough parking?"

Board members also raised questions about parking and traffic, including selectmen's representative James Keller.

"I think your proposal is challenged and it is your job to prove to the board that you can make it not challenged," he said.

Keller said he was concerned about the amount of development and parking proposed on the single-acre site.

"I think you have too many buildings and too much square footage for the parcel," he said.

Board Chairman Edward DeClercq asked if the buildings could be constructed farther back from the busy roadway. A major road-widening project is scheduled for 2019, Moldoff said.

Moldoff said even though 118 parking spaces are required at the site, zoning regulations for the overlay district allow for only half as many spaces to be created.

Gerade said Friday they will take the town's recommendations into consideration before returning to the board.

"We are taking a look at those and moving forward," he said.

Salem apartment complex ruling won't be appealed

By Doug Ireland direland@eagletribune.com | Posted: Thursday, November 5, 2015 7:10 am

SALEM, N.H. — A developer has dropped plans to appeal a Zoning Board of Adjustment decision that prevents the construction of a 10-building apartment complex off Brookdale Road and Northeastern Boulevard.

12 NE LLC proposed building the 240-unit complex on 19 acres at a busy commercial site but neighbors strongly opposed the project, citing a potential increase in traffic and crime.

For three hours, one resident after another spoke out against the project at a public hearing Oct. 6 at Town Hall.

By the time the hearing ended, 15 residents — including some who booed while in the audience — had let the board know the complex would destroy their quiet neighborhood.

The board responded by voting unanimously to deny the variance needed for the project. Attorney Steve Roberts said he and his client would return before the board Tuesday to seek approval for a second variance request.

If granted, that variance would allow 12 NE to exceed the town's maximum height of 35 feet for buildings. The proposal called for the buildings in the complex to be 43 to 52 feet tall.

12 NE is a partnership between Equity Northeastern Development and The Dolben Company Inc. of Woburn, Mass.

Company Executive Vice President Andrew Dolben said the proposed "luxury apartments" would rent for \$1,500 to \$1,900 a month and prevent young professionals from leaving New Hampshire — a major concern of state and local officials — to work in Massachusetts.

Roberts said he wanted the board to hear the matter before he appealed its decision on the first request for a variance. The project would have been a valuable asset to the town, boosting its tax base, he said.

The variance was needed because apartment complexes are not allowed in Salem's commercial-industrial district, according to town planning director Ross Moldoff.

But Roberts contacted the town Monday to say he would not seek a rehearing to appeal the decision, Moldoff said Wednesday.

So when a group of residents packed Town Hall on Tuesday night, Chairman Bernard Campbell told them the request had been withdrawn.

It was a victory for those who turned out for the hearing last month in opposition to the project.

"They indicated after the hearing Oct. 6 that they were going to appeal," Moldoff said of 12 NE. "It was a pleasant surprise they didn't go forward with an appeal."

That means the project will not be built, which is also pleasant news for residents such as William Kelly, a resident of Lake Shore Road for 49 years.

Kelly, 72, was among the 15 residents who told the board that the complex should not be allowed, describing how there were already large traffic backups in the area.

That's because the 28-acre property, which is assessed at \$48 million and would have to be subdivided, is the site of a 650,000-square-foot office building occupied by several business and approximately 1,000 employees.

It's best known as the former location of Digital Equipment and Cisco Systems, and the current home of Enterasys. Digital employed 3,000 workers before it closed, and Enterasys brought about 600 employees when it moved to Salem from Andover three years ago.

Kelly was relieved to hear Wednesday that the decision would not be appealed. Otherwise, it would have given 12 NE LLC a second chance to receive approval or possibly pave the way for a lengthy legal battle.

Kelly said people hardly ever move out of the neighborhood because it's such a pleasant place to live. Parking garages to accommodate 423 vehicles were also proposed at the site

"This is one of the greatest neighborhoods," he said. "There are a lot of people who have lived here for years, and years and years."

His daughter even lives across the street, he said.

But Kelly said he's concerned the developer will be able to build another type of massive project in the Business Innovation Overlay District being proposed in town. The district would give developers flexibility from land-use regulations.

Nevertheless, Kelly is glad the complex won't be built.

"The (increased) traffic would have been a problem on Brookdale," he said.

Neighbor Douglas Clark of 48 Brookdale Road agrees. He presented the town with a petition signed by 55 residents opposed to the project.

"I was not turned down by a single person," he said. "No one said they were in favor."

Neither Roberts nor Dolben spokeswoman Sara Graham could be reached Wednesday for comment.

Major solar project OK'd in Salem

By Doug Ireland direland@eagletribune.com | Posted: Friday, October 30, 2015 5:50 am

SALEM, N.H. — An innovative solar array project — one of the first in the area — may soon be producing low-cost energy atop a former landfill at LL&S Inc. on Lowell Road.

The sun's energy would then be used to help power the company's construction and demolition waste recycling facility at 87 Lowell Road after the town Planning Board granted unanimous approval for the project this week.

Approximately 4,180 photovoltaic panels, generating 1,316.7 kilowatts of electricity, would be installed in 32 rows over six acres of the closed, grass-covered landfill, according to the proposal.

"We haven't seen anything like that," town Planning Director Ross Moldoff said Thursday. "This will be the first. It is green energy and it will be nice to have something like that in Salem."

The solar array project, which must still receive state permits, would provide a tremendous savings for LL&S at a time when energy markets continue to be unpredictable, according to project representative Tony Giunta of Nobis Engineering.

"We have the highest electric rates in the country here in New England," Giunta said. "Not only are they the highest rates in the country, they are very volatile. They are up and down and all over the place."

Although the price of heating oil is dropping, sustainable and renewable energy projects are still the best alternative to dealing with widely fluctuating fossil-fuel markets, he said.

Over the last several decades, sustainable energy projects have been abandoned once fuel prices started to drop, Giunta said.

"That's happened again, again, again and again," he said. "Today, it's different. We have made a decision as a society, as a state, as a country that we are not going to fall for it anymore."

Giunta did not disclose the potential cost savings, but it's expected to be substantial, Moldoff said. Each panel would be 77 inches long and 39 inches wide, he said.

The project is proposed by Lowell Road Solar LLC in conjunction with LL&S, owner of the 21-acre site, and NhSolarGarden of Stratham.

NhSolarGarden founder Andrew Kellar said the project is among 30 that have received permits or are still seeking approval across the state.

"We are not new," Kellar told the board. "This is not the first community where we are asking for guidance and permission to do this sort of project."

NhSolarGarden's projects have been proposed in other parts of the state, including Franklin, Hinsdale, Keene, Dover, Durham, Rochester and Milton.

The 20-year deal with the property owner includes two five-year extensions, Kellar said. Specific terms of the agreement were not disclosed.

Kellar said it is the third solar array project in New Hampshire proposed atop a closed landfill. The closure was approved two decades ago.

LL&S, owned by ReEnergy Holdings, has operated in Salem since 1994 and been under contract with the town to accept residents' construction debris.

A five-alarm fire, which ignited in a pile of debris, burned for nearly 13 hours last month and required firefighters from 11 communities to extinguish. General manager David DeVito could not be reached Thursday afternoon for comment on the solar project.

Giunta said the solar array would be the best possible use of the former landfill since no excavation or development is permitted at the site.

Moldoff agreed.

"This seems to make a lot of sense for the use of that land," he said.

He said the town wondered if this type of project would be allowed in the commercial-industrial district but Assistant Town Manager Leon Goodwin determined it is a permitted accessory use.

The project was approved after little discussion from board members.

Residents fight cell tower plan

By Doug Ireland direland@eagletribune.com | Posted: Thursday, October 29, 2015 7:10 am

SALEM, N.H. — Neighbors are rallying against a proposal by Verizon Wireless to build a 100-foot cell tower on Zion Hill Road near North Salem School.

The residents said the tower would disrupt their quiet neighborhood — lowering property values, increasing traffic and presenting a potential health risk because of the radiation that would be emitted.

More than 30 people turned out for a Planning Board public hearing on the project Tuesday night. They included Susan Laverty of 38 Briarwood Drive.

“The fact is this is going to tower over all the trees,” Laverty said. “This is a lovely residential neighborhood and it should stay a lovely residential neighborhood.”

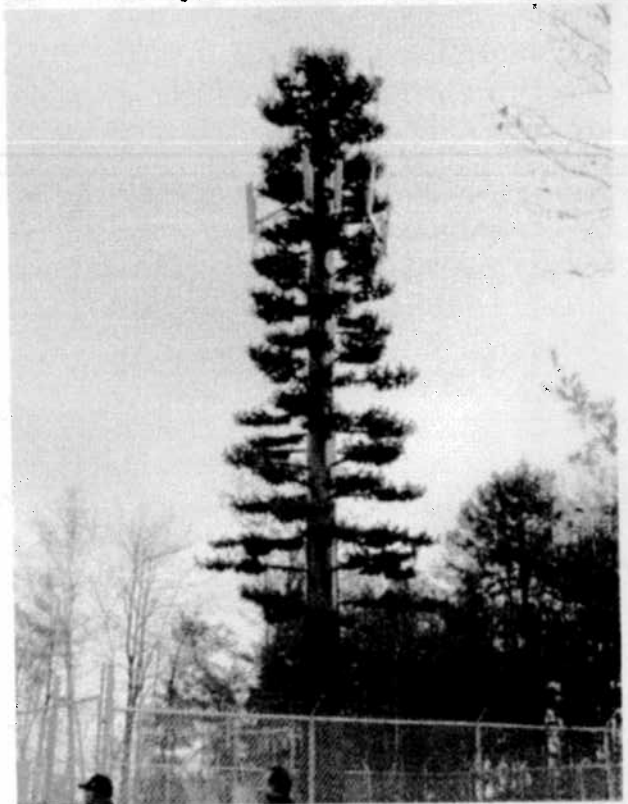
David Carstairs of 38 Briarwood Drive agreed.

“This thing will be about 250 feet from my bedroom window and my living room window,” he said. “I hate to see something like this so close to a residential area and a school.”

The “Monopine” tower, designed to resemble a pine tree and blend in with the surrounding trees, would extend about 20 feet over the tree line at 152 Zion Hill Road, according to Victor Manougian, an attorney for Verizon.

Part of the 44-acre site would be leased from owners Roger and Margaret Putnam. A small equipment shed would be constructed and the tower built within a 75-by-75-foot fenced-in compound.

But some board members and neighbors have said they are concerned the tower would look like a cheap, artificial Christmas tree. Manougian said that won't be the case.



Residents fight cell tower plan

COURTESY PHOTO Residents in Salem, N.H., are concerned about a 100-foot cell tower, similar to this one resembling a pine tree, that has been proposed on Zion Hill Road.

“It won’t just be something that jumps out at you,” he said.

Potential health risks are of greater concern to the seven residents who spoke against the project. Many studies show cell phones and towers increase the risk of developing cancer, they said.

Among those concerned about the health risks were Lavery and Jessica Delano of 34 Lazarus Way.

“These studies raise serious questions about the levels of radiation these towers emit,” Lavery said. “This ugly monstrosity is a danger.”

A conditional use permit and a height waiver are required from the town for the tower to be built.

“I don’t think that people realize how much of a health issue it is,” Delano said. “Way too many people have cancer.”

Before moving into her home, Delano said she checked to make sure there were no cell towers nearby. Delano said she’s especially concerned about the impact on her son, who attends North Salem School, which is just hundreds of feet away.

“It really angers me to think about this behind there,” she said.

Lavery said Wednesday that in less than a week, she has collected more than 120 signatures from residents opposed to the tower. She said she will present them to the town.

Manougian said the tower is needed because of inadequate cell phone coverage in the area.

Consultants for both Verizon and the town appeared before the board to speak about the proposal and local and federal regulations governing cell towers.

Residents in the Arlington Pond, Route 111, Shore Drive and North Main Street areas of Salem are especially affected by inadequate cell coverage, according to Verizon consultant Keith Vellante. He is an engineer with C Squared Systems of Auburn.

“There is a substantial amount of residents in that area lacking service,” Vellante said. “The growing reliance on electronic devices is growing at an explosive rate. Verizon is doing its best to keep up with the demand.”

Another Verizon consultant, radiation safety expert Donald Haes, said the tower would not pose a serious threat to public safety.

Verizon representatives were asked if a shorter tower could be erected and if more ideal locations were available. The telecommunications company was asked to prove that other possible locations in the area were not suitable for the tower, but Manougian said he did not have that information readily available.

“For me, it’s pretty critical information,” said James Keller, the selectmen’s representative to the board. “I need to be convinced you have exhausted all alternatives.”

Keller and other board members asked many questions about the proposal and made their recommendations to Verizon, which must address the concerns before returning to the board for approval.

Keller reminded neighbors that board members must consider the proposal in conjunction with planning regulations and not based on whether they like or dislike the tower.

Board Chairman Edward DeClercq said he is concerned about the potential for flooding if the site were excavated. There was flooding in the neighborhood when the school was renovated several years ago, he said.

Business district proposed to keep Salem workers in N.H.

By Doug Ireland direland@eagletribune.com | Posted: Thursday, October 22, 2015 7:14 am

SALEM, N.H. — This bustling community of about 28,000 residents has more than 15,000 workers, according to Assistant Town Manager Leon Goodwin.

The only problem is only about 12 percent of those workers — a little more than 2,400 — are employed in Salem, he said.

"It has been steadily declining over the years," Goodwin said.

But more than 50 percent of those 15,000 workers from Salem are working in Massachusetts, Goodwin said.

"We want to make New Hampshire competitive again with the towns to our south," Goodwin told the Planning Board on Tuesday.

That's why a group of nine town residents has been meeting for nearly two years to come up with a plan to expand economic opportunities in Salem and keep talented workers in their own hometown.

The loss of highly skilled New Hampshire workers to jobs across the border has been a major concern of state officials in recent years, including Gov. Maggie Hassan.

The members of Salem's Economic Development Action Committee have met 19 times in the past few years to draft an ordinance that establishes Salem's new Business Innovation Overlay District.

The district would encourage and support the growth in town of industries expected to create well-paying jobs and provide a major economic boost, according to Goodwin and committee Chairman Lisa Withrow.

"We brought many people in to gather information," Withrow said. "This ordinance represents a pathway for growth to Salem businesses in a contained geographic space, providing the opportunity to attract high-paying jobs for, among others, Salem residents."

The group relied on the planning, engineering and real estate development expertise of its members to draft the plan, she said.

Committee members include selectmen Chairman James Keller and Planning Board Chairman Edward DeClercq.

"We should all be able to live here, work here and have fun here," Withrow said.

The ordinance is geared toward attracting businesses in industries that include high technology, health care and biotechnology, Goodwin said.

It would allow for a mix of business, commercial, office, residential, institutional and entertainment uses in a campus setting, he said. Zoning in the district would complement, rather than replace, current zoning, Goodwin said.

Projects proposed in the district would be given flexibility from land-use regulations, including those governing density, setbacks, lot sizes, parking requirements and building heights, according to the ordinance.

This flexibility would be granted through conditional use permits approved by the Planning Board.

The district extends from the commercial-industrial district west of Interstate 93 in Salem and between I-93 and North and South Policy streets, he said. The properties must have a minimum of 10 acres, Goodwin said.

Goodwin said he's convinced adoption of the ordinance by voters would help slow the influx of Salem workers to Massachusetts. A public hearing would be held before the Planning Board decides if the proposed ordinance should be put on the ballot, DeClercq said.

"We have a workforce here that is skilled," Goodwin said. "They have very good sustainable jobs that we would like to bring back to the Salem community if possible."

Selectman Michael Lyons, who was sitting in the audience, spoke in favor of the district.

"This is something we really need," he said.

Those who opposed the district included Selectman Stephen Campbell and fellow town residents Martha Spalding and Betty Gay,

Although Goodwin said the district would cover only a small portion of the town, Campbell said the district would create "two Salems."

It's the same concern some residents had when a casino was proposed in town, he said.

"One of the concerns people had with the casino is that people (who benefit) would be in one part of town and the rest would be excluded," Campbell said. "It has this place where people work, live and play and the rest of us don't have to be bothered. ... "You are looking to create all sorts of quality-of-life issues."

Spalding was worried about creation of a "public-private partnership," among other concerns. Gay also had several concerns, including buildings being constructed higher than four stories.

Rockingham Honda, Toyota/Scion celebrate moves; Salem, N.H., car dealerships expand

| Posted: Sunday, October 18, 2015 7:45 am

SALEM, N.H. — There's been a double reason to celebrate at Rockingham Motors with the recent opening of its two dealerships on South Broadway.

State and local officials joined the Horgan family for ribbon-cutting ceremonies in recognition of their latest achievement. Also on hand were representatives for Honda and Toyota.

Owner Emmett Horgan cut the ribbon Oct. 8 at the new Rockingham Toyota/Scion at 412 South Broadway (Route 28). The dealership had been located for years at 354 Main St.

Among those joining the Horgans and their employees were New Hampshire Senate President Chuck Morse, R-Salem, and state Rep. Ronald Belanger, R-Salem.

Then last Tuesday, the dealership celebrated with another ribbon-cutting next door at the new Rockingham Honda at 402 South Broadway. That dealership was previously located at 360 North Broadway.

Among the family, friends and supporters attending the ceremonies were attorney Mark Johnson, Toyota New England Regional Manager George Brenner and Liz Toth of American Honda.

Expansion and relocation of the dealerships have been in the works for several years.

Horgan said Friday the moves have been beneficial, providing customers with "one-stop shopping" at adjacent locations as opposed to having two dealerships miles apart from each other.



Rockingham Honda, Toyota/Scion celebrate moves; Salem, N.H., car dealerships expand

AMANDA SABGA/ Staff photo Rachel Seely, Ryan, Carolyn and Emmett Horgan, Liz Toth of American Honda and State Senator and Senate President Chuck Morse at a ribbon cutting-ceremony at the new Rockingham Honda on Route 28 in Salem. 10/13/15

"The biggest plus has been the reception from customers," he said. "They love the facilities, the layout of the facilities and the comfort."

Increasing the total square footage between the two dealerships from 38,000 to 60,000 square feet is also a big advantage, Horgan said.

"Both facilities are substantially larger and it allows us to display more product," he said. "We are going to have a great inventory of Toyotas and Hondas available."

The two lots are a combined 6 acres compared to the approximately 4.5 acres at the previous locations, he said.

Horgan said his 100 employees are also pleased.

The Rockingham Motors group of dealerships has grown tremendously since its founding by Horgan in 1985.

Son and business associate Ryan Horgan has since joined his father as operations manager. Carolyn Horgan, Emmett's wife of 41 years, is also part of the family business.

Emmett Horgan also recently purchased the former state liquor store property across the street at 417 South Broadway. He said that site will be used to expand their sale of used vehicles.

Housing complex denied in Salem

By Doug Ireland direland@eagletribune.com | Posted: Friday, October 16, 2015 7:12 am

SALEM, N.H. — Strong opposition to a developer's plans to build 10 apartment buildings off Brookdale Road and Northeastern Boulevard have derailed the project.

12 NE LLC proposed constructing the 240-unit complex on 19 acres at a busy commercial site.

But 12 NE LLC, a partnership between Equity Northeastern Development and The Dolben Company Inc. of Woburn, Mass., encountered resistance from 15 residents concerned the project would harm their neighborhood.

They told the Zoning Board of Adjustment last week that the proposal for 39 Brookdale Road and 9 Northeastern Blvd., would lead to increased traffic and other problems, including crime, if it were allowed to be built.

Board members, who also voiced concern about the project, responded by voting unanimously against Dolben's request for a variance.

The variance was needed because apartment complexes are not allowed in Salem's commercial-industrial district, town planning director Ross Moldoff said Thursday.

The 28-acre property, which is assessed at \$48 million and Moldoff has said would have to be subdivided, is the site of a 650,000-square-foot office building occupied by several businesses and approximately 1,000 employees.

It's best known as the former location of Digital Equipment and Cisco Systems, and the current home of Enterasys. Digital employed 3,000 workers before it closed, and Enterasys brought about 600 employees when it moved to Salem from Andover, Mass., three years ago.

About 50 people turned out for the three-hour public hearing at Town Hall, sometimes booing or moaning as Dolben representatives spoke.

They especially booed when attorney Steve Roberts said the project would not create traffic problems.

"The town of Salem will have a tremendous benefit from this project — there will be significantly increased tax revenue," Roberts said. "Perhaps to greatest concern to some of the residents here, there will not be any increase in congestion or traffic hazards."

Moldoff and Chairman Bernard Campbell said it was the largest crowd they ever remembered attending a zoning board hearing.

Roberts and other project representatives, including executive vice president Drew Dolben, said the luxury apartments are needed in Salem to keep young professionals from leaving New Hampshire for jobs in surrounding states.

The 90 one-bedroom and 150 two-bedroom apartments would rent for \$1,500 to \$1,900 a month, Roberts said.

But board alternate Olga Guza questioned whether there was a need for that type of housing in Salem.

"I am kind of concerned that we could fill something of that capacity at that price," she said.

Dolben said more workers would come to the Granite State, providing an economic boost, if they knew there was more quality housing available.

The proposal also called for parking garages to accommodate 423 vehicles. Current zoning requires 480 spaces.

"Multifamily housing is something the town wants, the town desires, the town needs," Roberts said. "We think it is a great project that will benefit the town, that will benefit the citizens of the town."

But some of those residents disagreed, including Douglas Clark of 48 Brookdale Road. He presented a petition from 55 residents opposed to the project.

"I was not turned down by a single person," Clark said. "No one said they were in favor."

Clark said the project would not be appropriate for the area and that a Special Town Meeting is needed to decide the issue. His wife, Ann, expressed concern about an increase in crime if the complex were built.

"There has been an element that has come into our community and stalked our neighborhood because it is a lovely neighborhood," she added.

Ellen McCann of 49 Brookdale Road said she and her husband, Doug, are vehemently opposed, saying the complex would create a hardship for everyone in the neighborhood.

"It would certainly alter the character of the neighborhood," she said. "We already have too much traffic."

Although the board denied granting the variance request after hearing residents' concerns, it is still scheduled to hear 12 NE's request for a second variance Nov. 3, Moldoff said.

That variance is needed to exceed the town's maximum height of 35 feet for a building. The buildings in the complex would be 43 to 52 feet tall, according to the proposal.

Moldoff said the applicant wanted the board to hear the second request before proceeding with plans for an appeal.

Sara Graham, spokeswoman for The Dolben Company, could not be reached Thursday for comment on the board's decision. She declined to comment on the project before the hearing.

DOT outlines proposed highway maintenance facility

By Doug Ireland direland@eagletribune.com | Posted: Wednesday, September 30, 2015 7:12 am

SALEM, N.H. — When the state Department of Transportation announced plans to erect a highway garage and salt shed off Route 111 last year, it sparked a firestorm of opposition.

Residents, including New Hampshire Senate President Chuck Morse, R-Salem, were afraid the facilities and increased truck traffic would destroy their neighborhood.

There was so much dissent, the DOT delayed the project for a year and found a new location — the same spot where its current garage has sat since 1950.

So when department staff members unveiled their latest plans to the public Tuesday night in the aging garage at 54 Shadow Lake Road, there was no strong opposition.

“We have been here 60 some years,” DOT maintenance engineer Caleb Dobbins said. “It’s time for a retrofit.”

The proposal calls for construction of an 8,000-square-foot garage and 12,000-square-foot salt shed on the 11-acre property.

DOT engineer and maintenance supervisor Gary Clifford said it’s difficult having a small, outdated garage.

“It’s a challenge,” Clifford said. “This facility sorely needs to be replaced.

When a truck pulls inside, there’s barely room for anything or anybody else, he said. The facility is only 1,500 square feet.

“Picture 20 people working with a truck in here,” Clifford said. “It’s a horrible condition to work out of.”



DOT outlines proposed highway maintenance facility

RYAN HUTTON/Staff photoThe New Hampshire state Department of Transportation holds a public meeting at its garage at 54 Shadow Lake Road in Salem to discuss future upgrades and improvements to the site.

But some of the approximately a dozen residents and town officials who turned out had many questions how the \$3.5 million complex and storage of road salt would affect the surrounding area, including sensitive wetlands and nearby wells.

“How close is any of this to a well?” Conservation Commission member Ruth Tanner Isaks asked. “Are there any wells in this area?”

The site is across the street from a mobile home complex and wells. The project is expected to go out to bid this winter with construction starting in the spring.

Dobbins said the department’s treatment system would improve the water quality.

“If they don’t have a problem today, they won’t have a problem a year from today,” he said.

But Shadow Lake Road resident Doug Deschene remained skeptical about the water.

“After all this happens, will you pay to test our wells?” he asked.

Although local approval is not needed for state projects, Clifford said residents would be able to voice any concerns at a public hearing.

“We want to be good neighbors,” he said.

It’s rare when state funding becomes available to replace one of the DOT’s approximately 100 maintenance facilities across the state, Clifford said. Typically, only one a year is replaced, he said.

“We only get a chance to build these once in a lifetime,” Clifford said.

But there was concern that the new salt shed — proposed for part of the town forest parking lot — would limit the number of vehicles that could park there.

Planning Board member and Conservation Commission Chairman Linda Harvey asked if the shed’s location could be shifted to allow more vehicles. As proposed, about 20 vehicles could park there, Clifford said.

“Right now, our concern really is what you are showing (on the plan) isn’t going to be anywhere adequate,” Harvey said.

Clifford said his department would review its options.

West Lane resident Andy Willis, 74, praised the plan and said he hoped fewer parking spaces would mean fewer late-night parties and arguments in the lot, which is near his home.

“They go in that parking lot right now and have some pretty wild parties,” Willis said. “It gets pretty rough out there sometimes.”

While Clifford said the site isn't as ideal as the previous choice, the location would continue to work for the DOT.

"We thought it was going to be a good spot for us," Clifford said. "Obviously, it wasn't well received."

State sells former Salem liquor store for \$3.9M

By Doug Ireland direland@eagletribune.com | Posted: Tuesday, September 29, 2015 7:10 am

SALEM, N.H. — Three months after the New Hampshire Liquor Commission opened its largest store in the state at on South Broadway, the state sold its former location on up the road to local car dealer Emmett Horgan for \$3.9 million.

For half a century, the 10,748-square-foot brick building at 417 S. Broadway was a key generator of revenue for the state.

Local residents frequented the store to stock up on liquor and wine, as did many Massachusetts residents who would cross the border to take advantage of cheaper prices.

But the store closed in June, only hours before the state opened its new, 24,000-square-foot store down the street in the Rockingham Mall shopping plaza at 92 Cluff Crossing Road.

Horgan, owner of the Rockingham Motors group of car dealerships, recently negotiated an agreement with the state through Nautilus Realty Group to purchase the 4.9-acre site.

“We had over 50 inquiries on the site,” said Christopher McInnis, principal and president of Nautilus Realty. “There is little to no developable land left on that retail corridor on Route 28.”

The deal was approved by the Governor’s Executive Council on Sept. 16 after Horgan was chosen through a sealed-bid sale, McInnis said. The property was assessed at \$3.2 million.

McInnis said although he could not disclose the number of bidders, “We had more than a handful of serious buyers.”

Neither Horgan nor his son and business associate, Ryan Horgan, could be reached Monday for comment on the sale or their plans for the site. The property is across the street from Rockingham Toyota at 412 S. Broadway.



State sells former Salem liquor store for \$3.9M

STAFF FILE PHOTO This former New Hampshire State Liquor Store on South Broadway in Salem operated for 50 years until making way for a new, larger facility this summer. The property has been sold to local car dealer Emmett Horgan for \$3.9 million.

Rockingham Toyota opened on South Broadway in May after being located for years at 354 Main St. Rockingham Honda recently moved to 402 S. Broadway after previously being located at 360 N. Broadway.

Both are divisions of Rockingham Motors. Emmett Horgan founded his business in 1985.

Salem planning director Ross Moldoff said Monday he was aware of the sale, but the town had not been notified of plans for the property.

The site was acquired by the state in 1964 and the liquor store opened in 1965. Over the last five years, the store was ranked fourth out of 78 in annual sales, according to commission spokesman E.J. Powers.

Over that period, the store generated \$112,478,766 in sales — or an annual average of \$22,495,753, he said.

The new store is expected to generate more than \$25.7 million in annual sales — a \$2 million increase over the previous location.

It will soon be replaced as the biggest liquor and wine outlet in the state by a 32,000-square-foot store scheduled to open in Nashua.

The state has renovated or relocated 19 of its stores to improve the locations and boost profits. They include stores in Londonderry and Plaistow. A new store is now under construction in Epping.

Powers has said liquor store sales account for 10 percent of state revenues. Fiscal 2015 was the commission's best year since the first state liquor store opened in 1934, generating \$642 million in gross sales — a 3.4 percent increase over the previous year.

Salem officials have been concerned about a potential increase in traffic at the site, where an estimated 40,000 motorists pass a day.

Commission Chairman Joseph Mollica praised the sale in a statement Monday.

“Thanks to a successful collaboration with the New Hampshire Department of Administrative Services and Nautilus Realty Group,” he said, “the New Hampshire Liquor Commission will be delivering millions of dollars back to New Hampshire taxpayers from the sale of the South Broadway property.”

DOT proposes larger highway facility in Salem

By Doug Ireland direland@eagletribune.com | Posted: Friday, September 25, 2015 7:00 am

SALEM, N.H. — A year after strong opposition from residents prompted the state to change its plans to erect a highway garage and salt shed off Route 111, the Department of Transportation has found a new location for the project.

The DOT now proposes building the highway maintenance facility at its current 11-acre site about 1 1/2 miles down the road at 54 Shadow Lake Road. The state is not required to receive local approval for its projects, according to town Planning Director Ross Moldoff.

"It's basically the same project, but in a different location," he said.

Residents turned out in force at Town Hall last fall to oppose the proposed 8,000-square-foot garage, 12,000-square-foot salt shed and fueling station, saying the project would disrupt their neighborhood.

They said the highway maintenance facility would bring dangerous traffic to the area, including large vehicles fueling up and passing through at all hours of the day and night.

The opponents included Brook Hollow Drive resident and New Hampshire Senate President Chuck Morse, R-Salem. He told DOT officials and the town's Planning Board the facility should not be allowed to move forward without input from the public.

DOT project manager Gary Clifford has said the existing 1,500-square-foot building is 65 years old and needs to be replaced.

The reconfiguration of Route 111 increased the need for a new, larger facility, he said.

"It is a very old, obsolete and undersized facility," Clifford said.

Construction of the \$3.3 million project was to begin last spring, but the steadfast opposition led to it being put on hold and other options considered, DOT spokesman William Boynton said this week.

"Given the feedback we received, we took another look at it," Boynton said.

It resulted in the current plan being drafted. A letter about the latest plan, which describes the project as "only conceptual in nature," was sent to neighbors, Morse, Salem's nine state representatives and town officials last week.

A public informational meeting at the site has been scheduled for Tuesday at 6 p.m.

Clifford and DOT maintenance engineer Caleb Dobbins presented their proposal to the town's Conservation Commission on Sept. 2.

The project could affect wetlands and mean the loss of spaces in the town forest parking lot, which is owned by the state, Moldoff said.

"We have been leasing it from them for years," he said.

No one has notified the town of any opposition to the newest proposal, Moldoff said. Word of the latest plan is just circulating, he said.

Bids for the project would have to be approved by the Executive Council before any work could begin.

Salem ZBA asked to reconsider townhouse project

By Doug Ireland direland@eagletribune.com | Posted: Tuesday, September 1, 2015 7:10 am

SALEM, N.H. — The third time could be a charm for the developer of a townhouse project proposed on Sally Sweet's Way.

But the Zoning Board of Adjustment must first grant a rehearing requested for the senior housing complex after rejecting two earlier proposals.

The board will vote Tuesday night whether to reconsider the 10-home project proposed at 10 Sally Sweet's Way by Salem MOB 1 LLC. The meeting at Town Hall begins at 7 p.m.

Salem MOB recently notified the town by letter that it wanted a rehearing because, "The action of the Board of Selectmen was unlawful and unreasonable."

Salem MOB and property owner Gino Baroni sought a variance because town zoning only allows three single-family homes or two duplexes to be built at the 2.6-acre site, according to town planning director Ross Moldoff.

The board denied the first proposal in a 4-1 vote in June after some members and residents were concerned the project would lead to increased traffic and safety issues in a neighborhood that serves a large elderly population. Chairman Bernard Campbell was opposed.

The complex was proposed down the street from the Ingram Senior Center, which has several hundred members, and The Club at Meadowbrook — a development for people 55 and older.

Across from the senior center is The Residence at Salem Woods, an 84-unit senior housing complex scheduled to open next spring.

"With all the traffic coming in there, it's really bordering on not safe," resident Colleen King said.

Neighbors are also concerned their property values would decline.

"There is a great safety issue," resident Shirley Kerman said. "It is going to decrease the value. The entire neighborhood is going to be impacted."

Board members rejected a second request in July that called for the 10 townhouses to be built for people 55 and older.

Project representative David Jordan of MHF Design Consultants said Monday that Salem MOB amended its first proposal because some believed there should be an age limit for residents.

"One of the many stumbling blocks that people had was it wasn't age restricted," he said.

Some board members said they were concerned families with young children would be moving into an area with substantial traffic. But Jordan said the luxury townhouses would not be ideal for families with children.

The second request was denied, 3-2, after some board members, including John Manning, said the second proposal was very similar to the first plan presented a month earlier. Robert Uttley and Arthur Nobrega were also opposed to the project.

King and Kerman also spoke out against the proposal at the hearing July 7.

Jordan said Salem MOB believes board members denied the proposal without taking all of the necessary criteria into account. Salem MOB is not permitted to make a new presentation to the board unless the rehearing is granted, he said.

If a rehearing is granted, Salem MOB will be able to make a new presentation at the board's October meeting, Moldoff said.

If the rehearing is denied, Salem MOB would only be able to challenge the ruling in Rockingham Superior Court, he said.

Cell tower plan raises concerns in Salem, N.H.

By Doug Ireland direland@eagletribune.com | Posted: Friday, August 21, 2015 7:10 am

SALEM, N.H. — A proposal to erect a 100-foot cell tower on Zion Hill Road has some concerned it could disrupt the neighborhood.

Verizon Wireless has requested approval from the town's Planning Board to build the tower on the Schultz Farm property at 152 Zion Hill Road, near North Salem School, to improve communication in that area, according to attorney Victor Manougian.

"Verizon's goal is to assist residents and businesses and cover those gaps in the town," Manougian said. "There are substantial gaps in coverage in that area."

The tower would extend about 20 feet above the tree line, he said.

But board members said they are worried the tower would be too visible and detract from the neighborhood's beauty.

The town was required to notify all communities within a 20-mile radius from where the tower could be possibly seen, town planning director Ross Moldoff said. Those towns are Derry, Windham, Hampstead and Atkinson.

"We haven't had a new cell tower for many years in Salem," Moldoff said. "This is the first one outside the I-93 corridor."

Verizon representatives said residents of those communities should not see the tower.

The proposal calls for erecting a "Monopine" — a tower resembling a pine tree that would blend in with the surrounding trees.



Cell tower plan raises concerns in Salem, N.H.

Courtesy photoA 100-foot cell tower, similar to this one resembling a pine tree, has been proposed on Zion Hill Road in Salem, N.H.

Part of the 44-acre property would be leased from owners Roger and Margaret Putnam. A small equipment shed would be built and the tower erected within a 75-foot-by-75-foot fenced compound, Manougian said.

Some trees would be removed and a 30-foot swath created during construction, including a 16-foot-wide access road. The land would be leased from owners and the tower used by multiple companies.

"If I was a neighbor, I probably would not appreciate a 30-foot swath, Chairman Edward DeClercq said.

DeClercq is worried about the project's impact on residents of Briarwood Drive, especially during the construction.

"There is a lot of disturbance that is going to go on within that neighborhood," he said. "It's just uproaring the whole neighborhood."

One neighbor who is concerned is Karen Ruffen of 33 Briarwood Drive.

"To have all these construction vehicles, it would definitely make an impact on the neighborhood," she said. "Having the construction vehicles in and out, in and out will make a big disruption."

Ruffen is also worried about potential drainage issues as is board members such as DeClercq.

DeClercq said excavation of the tower site could lead to flooding of nearby homes as was the case when North Salem School was renovated several years ago.

"When they did the school, some homes ended up with water in their basements they never had before," he said.

Board member Paul Pelletier said he just wants to make sure the tower is appropriate for that location.

"I'm looking at protecting the neighborhood and the residents in the surrounding area," Pelletier said.

He asked if wind blowing against the tower would make a loud noise that disturbs neighbors.

DeClercq said he does dispute the need for the tower.

"We need the cell tower in the area, I understand that," he said. "But I look at this as a business for profit and residents need to be protected."

The site is only 200 to 300 feet from a recreation area.

DeClercq questioned Verizon's contention that the tower would not be seen in the distance.

"There must be a spot where they can see it from somewhere," he said. "I'm sure they can see it from Zion Hill."

One neighbor who backs the project is Tom Campbell of 160 Zion Hill Road.

"I support what they are doing," he said. "There is no way, in my opinion, you are going to see this from the top of Zion Hill. I think the plan they presented is pretty reasonable. "

Board member Linda Harvey questioned whether a tower designed to look like a pine tree would be aesthetically pleasing.

"I've seen these things," she said, "and they really look like a fake pine tree."

Moldoff said the board cannot not deny the request for a conditional use permit based on the design alone.

"The federal regulations say you can't deny these things because you don't like them," he said.

Manougian said Verizon would consider the suggestions and make any adjustments before returning to the board.

New life for an old landmark

By Doug Ireland direland@eagletribune.com | Posted: Tuesday, August 18, 2015 5:45 am

SALEM, N.H. — For more than a decade, the dilapidated Coca-Cola bottling plant on South Broadway stood empty, as if waiting for a wrecking ball to send its walls tumbling to the ground.

But in the last few months, the nearly century-old brick building is showing signs of life after the town's Planning Board granted approval for redevelopment of the historic plant.

New tenants have started to occupy the building, constructed in 1921 as one of the nation's first Coca-Cola plants.

The interior has been gutted to make way for a state-of-the-art facility while still preserving some of the plant's historic and iconic features.

Part of the building that had fallen into disrepair has been torn down and the entire site spruced up.

But the familiar Coca-Cola logo remains engraved into the structure's facade — a reminder of its rich history as one of the town's longest and largest employers.

While most of the trademark red-and-white Coke features are gone, the familiar colors can still be seen on some of the building's brick walls. Among the few remaining features are a bright red freight elevator now used for storage.

Less than a year ago, there were plans to lease the building to a car dealership after numerous other proposals fell through over the years. They included plans for shopping plazas and a waste-to-energy plant.

What was once bustling manufacturing space is now home to artistic endeavors and boardroom discussions in an office setting with the arrival of two marketing firms, 36creative and DocWeb.

"It's a huge improvement," said Trent Sanders, who operates 36creative with his partner, Steve Gabriel.



New life for an old landmark

New tenants are occupying the redeveloped Coca-Cola bottling plant on South Broadway in Salem. The building still retains its trademark Coca-Cola logo.

"It's an iconic brand and we are able to tailor it our needs," Sanders said. "It definitely has some history."

There's even a new rooftop deck designed to inspire creative minds in an attractive, quiet setting high above nearby Route 28 — Salem's main thoroughfare.

By year's end, a third tenant — Drive Custom Fit — will also occupy the property at 19-23 S. Broadway.

The fitness center, formerly known as Drive Health & Fitness, will soon be leaving its Methuen location for a facility more than double the size, co-owners Tony Hajjar and Jake Bosse said.

36creative and DocWeb, which specializes in creating websites for the medical industry, moved to the site earlier this summer and are quickly becoming accustomed to their new space.

Each occupies roughly 5,000 square feet after relocating from much smaller facilities.

36creative, whose workforce includes 16 full-time employees and approximately 35 freelance workers, was based in Windham.

"We now have double the space," marketing director Greg Tessitore said. "This is the first space that 36creative has had that was built for us."

It includes nontraditional office space and chairs, and a large kitchen to help feed hungry, creative minds.

The growing, 11-year-old company's clients have included Sovereign Bank and Hood, to name a few.

"We're getting our name out there," Tessitore said. "We're hoping to show that New Hampshire has some cool, creative companies."

Tessitore and Sanders said when the space was being custom built, they asked that as many of the building's original features be preserved if possible. That included the red-and-white walls, Tessitore said.

"We didn't want to use it unless they kept some of the old character," Tessitore said. "They wanted to cover it with Sheetrock."

DocWeb, most recently based in a small office on Main Street in Salem, opened in 2006 and now has 21 full-time employees and 500 clients around the country, managing partner John Alders said. It also has an office in East Greenwich, R.I.

"Everyone was excited when we got this building," said Alders, who is proud of the building's history.

Alders, 55, has lived in Salem for 30 years, but recalls visiting the area with his family as a young boy.

"I remember as a child, about 5 years old, and coming up to Canobie Lake Park and seeing the Coke building," he said. "We need to come up with a plan for signage that pays homage to this building."

Hajjar and Bosse joined forces with entrepreneur and Tuscan Village owner Joseph Faro to open Drive Custom Fit in Salem.

They originally planned to relocate to Tuscan Village on Main Street but then decided to move into about 12,000 square feet at the former Coke plant, Bosse said.

"Everybody is very, very excited," about the move, Hajjar said.

Drive Custom Fit will offer two fitness studios, two yoga studios, a training area, locker rooms, a cafe and a pro shop, Bosse said.

Property owner Joseph Scott of Metscott 21 LLC said he's pleased to redevelop the property after encountering opposition from town land-use boards.

He hopes to find three to five more tenants for the building. The plan approved by the Planning Board called for 30,000 square feet of retail space, 18,000 square feet of office space and 18,000 square feet of warehouse space.

Scott said he could have easily leased the space to several restaurants, but didn't feel it would be an ideal use of the property.

"We already have enough restaurants," he said. "We're talking to about a half dozen people right now. I'm being very selective."

The new tenants praised Scott for his work.

"Joe Scott's team did a great job," Alders said. "He's a great landlord."

Town planning director Ross Moldoff said the plant has been transformed into an attractive and useful piece of property.

"We're excited to have a couple of firms there and they want to do more," Moldoff said. "It's nice to have it renovated and turned into a productive asset instead of just an empty building."

State studies problems in Salem marsh

By Doug Ireland direland@eagletribune.com | Posted: Tuesday, August 11, 2015 7:10 am

SALEM, N.H. — State environmental officials are testing wetlands near Salem High School after learning of possible water quality issues.

The New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services recently collected water samples at the site and will analyze those to determine how the wetlands have been affected, according to state wetlands assessment specialist Sandra Crystall.

Crystall said Monday her office is analyzing 24 wetlands around the state as part of a comprehensive study funded by the U.S. Environmental Agency. She visited Salem about two weeks ago.

“We just went out there and did our sampling,” Crystall said. The results are not available yet.

The study looks both at pristine areas and those affected by development and other human activity, she said. In this case, the use of road salt to melt ice and snow along nearby Geremonty Drive in the winter has been a longtime concern in town.

“It will be interesting to see the chloride and also the nutrients,” Crystall said. “It will be interesting to see the comparison.”

For the last several years, classes of Salem High science students have studied the wetlands to assess their water quality. Science teacher Laura Preston has said the annual study has revealed a detrimental impact on the plant and animal life that inhabit the marsh. Each spring, the students wade through the mucky water and reeds to collect samples, donning hip waders and large nets. They test the water for pH, dissolved oxygen and conductivity and other factors and reported the results to the town’s Conservation Commission.

It was the students’ report to the commission this spring that caught Crystall’s attention. She decided the wetlands were worth studying and spoke to Preston and Conservation Commission member Ruth Isaks.

Crystall appeared before Salem selectmen July 13 to request approval to study the wetlands, located between the high school and Kelley Library. The School Department had already granted permission, Town Manager Keith Hickey said.

“We’re really just trying to identify the breadth of each wetland condition and what contributed to the poor condition,” she said.

Selectmen voted to allow the DES to monitor the wetlands but only after a brief discussion whether the town should be held liable to clean up the site if any contamination was found.

Selectman Patrick Hargreaves asked what would happen if the town refused permission.

"I will have to go elsewhere," she said.

Crystall assured selectmen the study was not designed to unveil any major contamination problems at the site if it existed. The tests would only study factors such as pH, oxygen and alkalinity, she said. The samples were collected July 20, Crystall said. Isaks, Assistant Town Manager Leon Goodwin and town planning director Ross Moldoff were also on hand, she said.

The state is also studying World End Pond on the other end of town, Crystall said.

July 13, 2015 10:03PM

Plans hinted at for larger Rockingham development

SALEM — The Key Auto Group's relocation of its flagship Ford dealership to Central Street looks to be the first step in the development of 50 acres of the former Rockingham Park property recently purchased by local developer and restaurateur Joseph Faro.

Late last year, the Planning Board approved the subdivision of the 50-acre parcel that runs from Pleasant Street to Route 28 from the remaining 120 acres of the Rockingham Park property. The subdivision helped pave the way for the final sale of the property by Rockingham Park to Faro.

Last week, the Zoning Board of Adjustment approved a variance allowing the Key Auto Group to sell used cars on a five-acre section of that property. Although the dealership will mainly sell new cars, it did need the variance. During the ZBA hearing, project engineer Mark Gross of MHF Design shed some light on the larger plans for the development of the 50-acre parcel, although he said it is still too early to make more detailed plans public.

"The five-acre piece is going to be subdivided from the 50-acre piece that was recently purchased from Rockingham Ventures (by Faro)," said Gross. "This project on the five-acre parcel is really the kick-off to the Tuscan Village project that's going to occur on the 50-acre parcel that will be developed under the large-scale project zoning. I'm not at liberty to talk about what's going to happen at this point, but it is very similar to what is currently developed on the Tuscan Market/Tuscan Kitchen property (on Main Street)."

The new Ford dealership will effectively be near one of the main access points to the new development, across the street from the post office, Gross said.

Although Gross said he couldn't go into greater detail about the larger development, he did answer several general questions about the project from ZBA members.

ZBA member Arthur Nobrega asked if Faro would be subdividing and selling more land off the 50-acre parcel in addition to the five acres sold to the Key Auto Group.

Gross said the plan is for Faro to develop the remaining 45 acres of the property. He also said the development would not impact the possible plans to bring casino gambling to Rockingham Park if the legislature ever approves an expanded state gaming bill.

Millennium Gaming of Las Vegas holds the option to purchase the racetrack if the New Hampshire Legislature does approve expanded gambling legislation and it is able to secure a casino license from the state.

Millennium's plans for a \$600-million-plus casino development at Rockingham Park would include a hotel and entertainment venues. The company has estimated that the development could create as many as 3,000 construction and gaming jobs. Part of Millennium and Rockingham Park's initial plan involved bringing live horse racing back to the park, something it has not offered since 2009. Gross said it is not clear at this time if Millennium's most recent plan will include live racing. Rockingham Park currently offers simulcasting on horse and dog racing as well as charitable gaming.

ZBA member Bernard Campbell noted that his board's purview only extended at this time to the used auto sales for the Key Auto Group, which was unanimously approved.

He said the Planning Board will play a much greater role as the larger development plans move forward.

Car dealership proposed on former Rockingham Park land in Salem, N.H.

By Doug Ireland direland@eagletribune.com | **Posted: Wednesday, July 8, 2015 12:25 am**

SALEM, N.H. — Only two months after the defeat of casino gambling legislation dimmed hopes a casino may be established at Rockingham Park, a car dealership has been proposed for part of the 170-acre property.

Key Auto Group, which operates dealerships and repair facilities across Southern New Hampshire, wants to build a dealership on approximately five acres at 11 Central St, according to company attorney Steve Patterson. The company is based in Portsmouth.

The land is part of the 50 acres sold by Rockingham Venture — owner of the former horse track — to local restaurateur Joseph Faro and OMJ Realty earlier this year.

The property was sold for about \$9.6 million, according to county records. Faro is the owner of Tuscan Kitchen restaurant and Tuscan Village complex on Main Street.

OMJ Realty is to appear before the Planning Board on July 14 to request approval to subdivide the land at 11 Central St.

Patterson confirmed that his company is negotiating to buy land from Faro and OMJ Realty and needs subdivision approval and a variance. A hearing on the variance request was to be held Tuesday night.

"Our little five-acre property is part of bigger plan," Patterson said.

He was referring to Faro's plans for the remaining 45 acres sold by Rockingham Venture and park president and general manager Edward Callahan.

The land had been part of the historic race track for more than a century. The Rock drew thousands of spectators for races over decades until live racing ended five years ago.

The 50 acres used to accommodate several dozen barns that once housed more than 1,600 horses. The barns fell into disrepair and were razed last fall after the property was subdivided.

Faro, praised by town officials for his redevelopment of part of Main Street, has said he's still considering his options for the 50 acres, including mixed uses for the site.

"I don't have a formal plan yet," Faro said in April. "There are so many things that have to happen. ... We're in a holding pattern."

At that point, Faro and Salem residents were waiting to see if the Legislature passed Senate Bill 113, which would have brought two high-end casinos to the state. One was expected to be established at Rockingham Park.

"We're hoping that works," Faro said of the casino proposal. "It's a great piece of property. We're happy to be developing it.

Faro was hesitant to speak about plans for the property Monday, saying it was too early to comment.

This spring, Faro said he would consider building a hotel on the property whether or not there was a casino next door. Faro also said he planned on continuing to expand Tuscan Village, which also includes a popular market, over the next several years.

Callahan has said Millennium Gaming of Las Vegas continues to hold an option to purchase the remaining 120 acres in case casino gaming is legalized in New Hampshire.

Last year, a casino bill was passed by the Senate but defeated by a single vote in the 400-member House.

Key Auto Group seeks town approval for the new dealership after presenting a proposal to renovate another one it owns, Salem Ford/Hyundai at 470 S. Broadway, to the Planning Board last winter. That proposal is still pending.

"These two properties in Salem we think are very suitable for an auto dealership," Patterson said.

The company opened Key Collision Center of Salem at 12 Hampshire Road in 2014.

The variance requested by Key Auto Group seeks permission to allow the 29,000-square-foot dealership to be built within 100 feet from another dealership, Toy Store Auto Sales. The proposal also includes 368 parking spaces for the display of vehicles and 87 other spaces.

The variance is needed because town zoning requires at least 2,000 feet between dealerships that sell used cars in the commercial-industrial district, according to town planner Ross Moldoff.

There is no restriction for dealerships that only sell new vehicles, but most do offer used vehicles for sale, he said.

This is the third dealership proposed in that area in less than a year, Moldoff said.

"All of a sudden we have three car dealerships off South Broadway and for years we didn't see anything as far as new car dealerships," he said.

Patterson said his company is looking to establish its Ford dealership on Central Street and the Hyundai dealership at the new facility proposed at 470 S. Broadway. It would replace a 33,000-square-foot facility that has stood on the three-acre site for more than 40 years, he said.

"We think it would be good for us and Salem to get two new state-of-the art car dealerships," Patterson said.

July 05, 2015 8:41PM

New fizz given to old Salem Coca-Cola plant

SALEM — For years, the fate of the former Coca-Cola bottling plant on South Broadway has been up in the air.

Now tenants are starting to fill up the distinctive brick building, bringing new business and employees to town while maintaining some of the former plant's historic character.

Earlier this spring, the town's Planning Board approved a site plan for office, retail and warehouse use at the building.



(/storyimage/UL/20150706/NEWS02/150709596/AR/0/AR-150709596.jpg?q=100)

The new offices of 36creative at the old Coca-Cola bottling plant on South Broadway in Salem. (Courtesy photo)

"We've worked hard for 9 1/2 years to get that building fixed up and occupied," owner and developer Joseph Scott told the Planning Board in March. Initial plans were scuttled by the recession, and then the developers waited to see if a casino would be built at Rockingham Park.

A more recent plan to operate an automobile sales business at the property was turned down by the Zoning Board of Adjustment.

One of the early tenants in the building is the graphic design, Web design, and advertising agency 36creative. The agency began in Salem a little over a decade ago, but then moved to Windham. With the promise of an adaptable, historic space at the former Coca-Cola bottling plant, the agency made the move back to Salem.

A big draw for the agency was that it was able to develop the space to suit its needs, while still maintaining some of the character of the building, such as exposed brick walls, according to Greg Tessitore, director of marketing.

"The space is perfect for what we were looking for," said managing partner Steve

Gabriel.

In addition to being close to Boston, but at a fraction of the big city rental cost, working in the former bottling plant has some added cachet for 36creative and its clients, he said.

"Strategically, Coca-Cola is one of the most recognized brands in the world," Gabriel said.

That balance between old and new can be seen in a number of ways throughout the agency's office. There's an open floor plan, a custom-designed front desk by Portsmouth artist Jon Piatt, and white wall space that Managing Partner Trent Sanders said will soon display art work by employees and community members.

Heading out to the agency's new roof deck, there's also another piece of the building's history in the form of a decade's old pallet elevator.

As work continues on the new office space, Sanders said the priority of the agency is still on engaging with its clients and providing the kind of personalized service that they might not be able to get from a big Boston agency.

Tessitore said there is a new tech boom in the Boston area extending into New Hampshire that provides plenty of opportunities for 36creative.

"We are small, agile, and nimble and clients see a lot of potential with us as a smaller agency," he said.

The building is also home to medical offices, and plans are underway for a fitness center on the first floor.

Developers no longer forced to pay Salem impact fee

By Doug Ireland direland@eagletribune.com | Posted: Tuesday, June 30, 2015 1:20 am

SALEM, N.H. — The town's failure to upgrade its police and fire stations means developers will no longer have to pay public safety impact fees for their projects.

When voters defeated plans for a \$23.4 million public safety complex in March, it put the town in a difficult position.

The town had been accepting thousands of dollars in fees from builders for years for potential public safety improvements that were never made, according to town planner Ross Moldoff.

The Planning Board agreed last week to follow Moldoff's recommendation this spring and stop charging the fee since there are no immediate plans to upgrade the town's nearly 50-year-old, outdated police and fire stations.

"The idea was if we're not spending the money for the purposes that the fees were collected for, perhaps we should stop collecting those fees," Moldoff said. "There would be no more money coming in."

The town has collected \$7,000 in public safety impact fees for every single-family home built since its fee schedule was last updated in 2005.

More than \$204,000 in fees sits in an account and town officials debated whether the money would have to be returned to developers. Any fees not spent nor designated for a specific purpose within six years must be returned.

The money can still be used for public safety improvements even if it's not spent to build new stations, according to Assistant Town Manager Leon Goodwin and Planning Board Chairman Edward DeClercq.

The fees had been collected under Salem's public impact fee ordinance ever since it was adopted in 1994. The town will still collect impact fees to fund road, recreation and school costs after the board voted 6-1 to revise its fee schedule.

Some town officials — including four of five selectmen — hoped approval of the public safety complex at the polls would satisfy a decades-old need to improve the stations after voters rejected previous proposals.

Residents voted 1,656 to 1,591 against the project, which required three-fifths approval.

Selectman Stephen Campbell insisted that taxpayers couldn't afford the complex and spoke in opposition of the project, often clashing with fellow selectmen who backed the proposal.

Campbell told the Planning Board last week that taxpayers would be faced with a tremendous cost burden if the town no longer charged the public safety impact fees.

"I don't see why this board would even consider doing away with the public safety impact fees because we are not using them," he said. "I would think you are doing a grave disservice to the taxpayers of this town to do away with them just because an article in March failed."

He accused board members of "burying their heads in the sand," irritating DeClercq.

Board member Ronald Belanger, who is opposed to charging any impact fees, said Salem should avoid the predicament that plagued Londonderry when a property owner filed a lawsuit against the town in Rockingham Superior Court three years ago.

The property owner challenged the impact fee she was charged but lost her appeal.

But Londonderry officials still decided to review their collection of impact fees and ended up refunding more than \$1.2 million. It was found the town improperly collected some money and did not spend or designate fees for specific projects within the six-year limit.

Belanger, the only board member to vote in opposition, said impact fees discourage developers.

"That's why they go to other communities to build and get out of Salem," he said. "I don't want to lose developers."

Builder Steven Lewis of Atkinson is among those who say he has questioned how Salem justifies some of the impact fees it has charged.

Lewis has completed several projects in town, including Braemoor Woods and the Clough Farm apartment complex. He's now building a 22-unit condominium complex nearby.

Lewis said he's made various improvements in the community over the years, including putting in sidewalks and walking trails, but some of that work has been overlooked.

"What bothers me is I pay all these impact fees and do things that aren't required and I don't get credit for it," he said. "I never minded paying my fair share."

Salem senior housing plan scaled back

By Doug Ireland direland@eagletribune | Posted: Thursday, June 18, 2015 12:15 am

SALEM — The developer of a senior housing development proposed on Lawrence Road has agreed to scale back the size of the heavily scrutinized project.

Neighbors and town planning officials expressed concern with the proposal when it was presented to the Planning Board in May, saying the development would create additional traffic and safety problems in what is already a dangerous area.

But DHB Homes of Londonderry has since decided to seek approval for only 64 homes in the 55-and-older development on 36 acres at 78-80 Lawrence Road.

"They have dropped 10 of the units," town planning director Ross Moldoff said.

One of the major concerns about the project were four short "spur roads" that would be built throughout the neighborhood. The Fire Department and board members were worried they would hamper access.

"We eliminated them all," project representative Jeffrey Brem told the Planning Board last week. Brem and Kurt Meisner of Meisner Brem Corp. said they have revised the plan to alleviate the concerns of neighbors and board members. A traffic study will also be done.

Meisner said Salem needs more senior housing and the project would be an asset to the town. A walking trail is also proposed, Brem said.

Planning officials were worried that the 74 two-bedroom homes would be too many for that area and raised questions about potential flooding after the site is cleared of trees as proposed.

Board member Robert Gibbs said there is already flooding in the area.

Moldoff initially said last month he was concerned the homes — proposed under the town's senior housing ordinance — would be too close to a wetlands buffer.



Salem senior housing plan scaled back

The developer of a 74-unit senior housing project proposed in this area along Lawrence Road in Salem has decided to reduce the size of the development after neighbors and planning officials voiced their concerns.

The density requirements of the ordinance allow developers to build more homes than ordinarily permitted under traditional zoning if they are designated for people 55 and older.

Under that 17-year-old ordinance, the DHB plan calls for four times as many homes than what could ordinarily be built, Moldoff said.

Allowing developers to maximize the number of homes they could build has led to several senior housing projects being proposed in the last few years.

Among those are 46 homes approved last year on Pond Street and 16 on Pleasant Street. Another senior housing project was proposed on Pond Street at the site of Eternal Light Memorial mausoleum but the Zoning Board of Adjustment denied a request for a variance.

When those projects were proposed, neighbors also voiced their concerns to the Planning Board about potential density, traffic, safety and drainage issues.

Michael Lyons, the selectmen's representative to the board, said last month it may be time for the town to reconsider whether it should have a senior housing ordinance.

Several residents told the board the project would exacerbate a serious traffic safety problem on a street where many young children live.

"It's a pretty nasty road to walk down," said Jason Ponte of 66 Lawrence Road. "I am more concerned about traffic than anything."

Cheryl Brown was also concerned. She is a co-director of Patsy's House Daycare & Learning Center at 76 Lawrence Road.

"It's pretty close to our playground," Brown said. "At certain times of day, you can't even pull out of the day care."

Board members, including Chairman Edward DeClercq, Linda Harvey and Paul Pelletier, said sidewalks are needed in the area to improve safety.

A updated plan and other revisions are expected before the board eventually votes on the housing plan.

Townhouse project denied in Salem, N.H.

By Doug Ireland direland@eagletribune.com | Posted: Wednesday, June 17, 2015 12:20 am

SALEM, N.H. — As the town sees a resurgence in development, some residents are worried it will likely lead to increased traffic and safety issues in their neighborhoods.

Planning officials are concerned as well and want to ensure any new development fits in with what's already there.

That's why the Zoning Board of Adjustment recently rejected a request by Salem MOB 1 LLC for a variance to allow 10 townhouses to be built at 10 Sally Sweet's Way.

The vote was 4-1, with Chairman Bernard Campbell in opposition after board members agreed with the several residents who spoke that the project would create additional traffic in a neighborhood that serves a large elderly population.

Neighbors were also concerned their property values would be affected.

Zoning only allows three single-family homes or two duplex units to be built on the 2.6-acre parcel, according to town planning director Ross Moldoff.

"It's not the right area for it," board member Robert Uttley said.

Michael Smith agreed as did fellow board members John Manning and Arthur Nobrega. Campbell said he also had some concerns, but supported the request.

"What really scares me is the density," Smith said.

The project was proposed down the street from the Ingram Senior Center, which has several hundred members, and The Club at Meadowbrook — a development for people 55 and older.

Across from the senior center, construction is underway at The Residence at Salem Woods, an 84-unit elderly housing complex scheduled to open next spring.

After a presentation by engineer David Jordan and property owner Gino Baroni, Manning said he still had many questions about the plan and did not feel there were enough development restrictions.

"In my own personal opinion, I don't like the plan at all," Manning said. "It isn't the area for it."

Some board members were concerned families with young children would be moving into an area with increased traffic.

Jordan said the luxury townhouses would not be conducive to families with children and are ideal for that location.

"We believe and the owner thinks there is definitely a need for this type of housing in Salem," Jordan said.

Many of the nearly two dozen people who packed the Town Hall meeting room June 2 live at The Club at Meadowbrook.

"With all the traffic coming in there, it's really bordering on not safe," resident Colleen King said. "This variance application, I believe, greatly ignores the density."

Neighbor Shirley Kerman agreed.

"There is a great safety issue," she said. "It is going to decrease the value. The entire neighborhood is going to be impacted."

While the board denied the variance request, it did unanimously approve another request for a three-story, 100,000-square-foot office building and parking garage to be constructed at 6 Industrial Way, Moldoff said.

Industrial Way Associates sought a variance to allow the building to be up to 74 feet tall. Under the town zoning ordinance, any building constructed in the Industrial District cannot exceed 35 feet in height.

The 16.6-acre property is owned by Paul V. Profeta & Associates of West Orange, N.J. A tenant has not been found for the site, according to a project representative.

June 07, 2015 10:31PM

Salem Town Forest would expand under deal

SALEM — A potential deal could dramatically increase the size of the Salem Town Forest.

The Conservation Commission is considering the purchase of about 72 acres of the Putnam property adjacent to the 200-acre town forest. In addition, the potential purchase of another portion of the Putnam property by a local real estate developer could add a little more than 40 acres to the total expansion of the project.

Last week, the Conservation Commission opened a public hearing on the potential purchase of the 72.5-acre parcel for \$450,000 using conservation funds. Under that deal, there would be a \$1,000 deposit on the land with the final purchase and sale not taking place until a number of details were ironed out and the purchase was approved by the board of selectmen.

However, the commission agreed to table the public hearing until next month when some members of the commission said questions about the amount of wetlands on the property and potential property rights for the Putnams need to be answered before there is any agreement.

The remaining 40 or so acres would come through a deal with developer Steve Hatem, who has entered an agreement to buy the remaining portion of the Putnam property.

Town Planning Director Ross Moldoff said Hatem is willing to do a limited housing development on the front portion of the property along Zion Hill Road and donate the backland to the town to add to the town forest.

Much of the property already has trails and logging roads that connect to the existing town forest, Moldoff said.

"There are not a lot of these parcels that are this size left undeveloped in Salem," he said.

Conservation Commission member Thomas Campbell said the property has been on the town's wish list for at least 25 years.

However, he said he would rather see the commission get more information on the total acreage of wetlands on the property, the proposed property rights the Putnams are requesting and see the developer's deal for the remaining acreage finalized before

the town agrees to the purchase.

"I'm not comfortable agreeing to something and having the staff fill in the details later," Campbell said. "It's a great opportunity that we have been waiting for for 25 years, waiting another month or two to get the details will not hurt us."

Conservation Commission member Stephanie Tetreault said the town should act now, since it will not be spending any money other than a \$1,000 deposit until all the conditions of the sale and real estate deals are met and approved.

Salem residents worried about housing development

By Doug Ireland direland@eagletribune.com | Posted: Monday, May 25, 2015 1:20 am

SALEM, N.H. — Neighbors and town planning officials are concerned about a proposal for a 73-home senior housing development planned on Lawrence Road.

If approved, the 55-and-older housing project proposed by DHB Homes of Londonderry would create traffic and safety issues along the heavily traveled road, residents said.

"There's a lot of traffic on that road already," said Gregg Dicecca, a resident of 66 Lawrence Road. "There is also a lot of noise generated from Route 28, even (Interstate 93)."

Jason Ponte, who lives at 66 Lawrence Road, agreed building a housing development would exacerbate a serious problem on a street where many children live.

"It's a pretty nasty road to walk down," he said. "I am more concerned about the traffic than anything."

Cheryl Brown, co-director of Patsy's House Daycare & Learning Center at 76 Lawrence Road, said construction of 73 homes near the day-care center would create additional traffic and safety problems on the dangerous, busy street.

"It's pretty close to our playground," she said. "At certain times of day, you can't even pull out of the daycare."

Pat Blodgett, who lives next to the site at 74 Lawrence Road, said she is trying to sell her home. Blodgett is afraid she won't be able to sell it if a large housing project is built.

"Nobody wants to buy a house with a development behind it," she said.

The town's Planning Board received its first look at the proposal during a recent conceptual discussion of the project.



Salem residents worried about housing development

A 73-unit senior housing project has been proposed for this site near Patsy's House Daycare and Learning Center on Lawrence Road in Salem. Neighbors and town officials are concerned about potential traffic and other issues.

Some board members and planning director Ross Moldoff said they also had concerns about traffic and safety.

The Fire Department and board members are concerned about the several short, dead-end or "stub" roads proposed in the development, hindering access, Moldoff said.

Planning officials are also worried that 73 homes would be too many for that area and raised questions about potential flooding after the 36-acre site was cleared of trees.

"You have a lot of units here," Moldoff said.

He was concerned that some of the homes would be too close to a wetlands buffer, meaning they would have to be relocated.

"They may be moving some of those homes at some point," he said. "Most of the trees will be removed. That has potential for erosion and a lot of drainage issues."

Board member Robert Gibbs was also concerned about drainage.

"People are already getting flooding," he said.

The homes would be constructed under the town's senior housing ordinance, adopted in 1998.

The ordinance's density requirements allow developers to build more homes than ordinarily permitted under traditional zoning if they are designated for people 55 and older.

"This is four times the number of homes that could be built under a conventional plan," Moldoff said.

Allowing developers to maximize the number of homes they could build has led to several senior housing projects being proposed in the last few years.

They include 46 homes approved last year on Pond Street and 16 on Pleasant Street. Another senior housing project was proposed on Pond Street at the site of Eternal Light Memorial mausoleum but the Zoning Board of Adjustment denied a request for a variance.

Residents of those neighbors also voiced their concerns to the Planning Board about potential density, traffic, safety and drainage issues.

Michael Lyons, the selectmen's representative to the board, said it may be time for the town to reconsider whether it needs a senior housing ordinance. It's also inevitable that the 36-acre site will be developed, he said.

"We don't have to have a senior housing ordinance," Lyons said. "I think we have enough of this."

Project representative Kurt Meisner of Meisner Brem Corp. said the project would be an asset to Salem. He said they would work with the town to resolve any concerns.

"I think this is a great place for senior housing," Meisner said. "It is needed in the town."

Salem may eliminate public safety impact fees

By Doug Ireland direland@eagletribune.com | Posted: Wednesday, May 6, 2015 12:45 am

SALEM — The defeat of a proposed \$23.4 million public safety complex at the polls in March has put the town in a difficult position.

It may be forced to return the \$204,000 collected from private developers in public safety impact fees for failing to make significant improvements to its police and fire stations, town officials said.

As a result, the Planning Board is considering eliminating the fees to avoid violating town regulations and a potential legal challenge.

The recommendation by town Planning Director Ross Moldoff comes in the wake of voters' rejection of the public safety complex. Residents voted 1,656 to 1,591 against the project, which required three-fifths approval.

"The town has not made progress addressing the capital facilities that the impact fees are supposed to pay for," Moldoff said.

Impact fees are collected to fund the costs of improvements made by towns as a result of development. Other impact fees charged by the town, including those for schools, would still be collected, he said.

If approved, the 53,915-square-foot complex for both the police and fire departments would have been built at the site of the existing police station on Veterans Memorial Parkway.

The police and fire stations have not received significant upgrades since they were built in the mid-1960s.

By law, the town must return the money to developers if not spent within six years after it is collected, Moldoff said. None of it's been spent, he said.

Londonderry found itself in a similar situation three years ago and ended up in a legal battle.

A property owner filed a lawsuit against the town in Rockingham Superior Court, challenging the impact fee she was charged. She lost her appeal, but Londonderry officials decided to review its collection of impact fees.

It was found the town improperly collected some fees and did not spend or designate fees for specific projects within the six-year limit. Londonderry ended up refunding more than \$1.2 million in impact fees.

Salem adopted its impact fee ordinance in 1994. It's recommended the fee schedule be reviewed every five years, Moldoff said.

"Our last impact fee study was done in 2005," he said.

Under that fee schedule, a developer would have to pay a public safety impact fee of \$570 per 1,000 square feet for retail space. The fee is \$560 per 1,000 square feet for office space and \$300 per 1,000 feet of industrial or manufacturing space.

The Planning Board reviewed an updated fee schedule at its meeting April 28. It was drafted by consultant Bruce Mayberry of BCM Planning, who advised the town stop charging the public safety impact fees.

If this money is not spent by 2016, it must be returned, Moldoff said.

Board member Ronald Belanger said the town should not stop collecting the fee. He also recommended none of the money be spent until the issue is analyzed further.

"I would be opposed to that at this time," he said. "I think we should stay pat."

The board conducted a public hearing on the fee schedule, but no one spoke.

The issue was tabled until the board's meeting June 23 after selectmen's representative James Keller raised questions about whether some of the fee money could be spent on police and fire vehicles.

"I think we will have a full picture and can make an educated decision," Keller said.

Moldoff said a portion could be spent on the vehicles but he would have to consult with Mayberry.

Salem Farmers Market moves to plaza

By Doug Ireland direland@eagletribune.com | Posted: Friday, May 1, 2015 12:30 am

SALEM — The Salem Farmers Market can relocate to a busy shopping plaza if measures are taken to ensure the safety of pedestrians and vendors.

The farmers market, which outgrew its space at the Lake Street Garden Center, will open May 10 at Salem Market Place on North Broadway, according to co-president Kay Barretto.

The move comes after the Planning Board granted unanimous approval this week for the 5-year-old market to relocate to the plaza parking lot to accommodate a rapidly growing customer base.

"We are absolutely thrilled," Barretto said Thursday. "It's a great location on (Route) 28. We are thrilled to stay in the community."

The farmers market began as a small operation in Hedgehog Park five years ago, drawing 75 to 100 customers on a typical summer Sunday, according to president Jane Lang.

But the weekly market, now offered in the winter as well, has increased in popularity, attracting more than 400 people on peak days, she said. It's open from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

The nonprofit organization is seeking a building in Salem where it can accommodate both the summer and winter markets, Lang said.

Plaza manager David Morin and market organizers said being located in the plaza lot on heavily traveled Route 28 would surely boost the number of customers stopping by to purchase fresh produce and other products.

It would also increase the number of customers visiting other businesses in the plaza, he said. They include Chief Wok restaurant.

"More people will see it, more people will stop in," he said. "It will be a win-win situation."

Board member Paul Pelletier agreed.



Salem Farmers Market moves to plaza

RYAN HUTTON/Staff photoThe Salem Farmers Market has received Planning Board approval to relocate to the Salem Market Place parking lot. The market will open there May 10.

"This will give you better exposure and help the other businesses as well," Pelletier said.

Town Planning Director Ross Moldoff and the Planning Board just want to make sure customers and the approximately 20 to 25 vendors will be safe even though Morin said all but four of the 18 businesses in the plaza are closed Sundays.

"We were concerned initially about the adequacy of the parking," Moldoff said.

At least 156 parking spaces are available in the lot at 224 N. Broadway, but probably no more than 74 of those would be needed in a worst-case scenario, Morin said. Bank of America has offered use of its 47 spaces as well, he said.

Moldoff recommended a barrier of cones be put up each week to protect the vendors and that parking for customers be moved back from the busy road.

Pelletier and fellow board member Ronald Belanger said they were also concerned about safety, especially if traffic backed up onto North Broadway.

Belanger said traffic from a nearby car dealership could potentially contribute to the safety issues.

Morin and Barretto accepted Moldoff and the board's recommendations on where cars should be allowed to park to avoid traffic congestion and accidents. Lang, who happens to be a Planning Board member, did not participate in the discussion to avoid a potential conflict of interest.

"We will make every effort to educate our customers on how they should park," Barretto said.

Board member James Keller praised Morin and farmers market officials for taking steps to protect the public. But he asked that the board receive an update later this month.

"Nobody anywhere wants something to happen where someone gets injured," he said. "Let's assess how it operates, and let's make adjustments if we need to make adjustments."

Also at the meeting Tuesday, the board reviewed conceptual plans for a 100,000-square-foot building proposed at 6 Industrial Way.

The project, proposed by Industrial Way Associates, is being built on speculation, according to project representative Bernard Campbell.

It would be three stories and have 693 parking spaces — while only about 335 are required, Moldoff said.

They include 63 spaces in an underground parking garage. If approved, it would be one of the largest buildings in Salem, Moldoff said.

"I think this building has the potential to be a large taxpayer and a benefit to the community," Campbell said.

But two neighbors said they were worried about the 74-foot-tall building being built across the street from them.

"I think our concerns are obviously the height of the building," Evelyn Jackson-Cole said. "What will this mean for our property value?"

Large office building proposed in Salem

Posted: Friday, April 24, 2015 12:20 am

SALEM — The Planning Board will consider a proposal for a 100,000-square-foot office complex when it meets Tuesday.

The three-story office building, proposed by Industrial Way Associates, and would be constructed on a 16.6-acre site at 6 Industrial Way, according to town planning director Ross Moldoff.

Moldoff said board members will have a conceptual discussion of the project at their meeting, which starts at 7 p.m.

If approved, the building would be among the largest in town, he said.

The property is owned by Paul V. Profeta & Associates of West Orange, N.J.

Few details on the proposal have been released.

Project representative Bernard Campbell, a Salem attorney, said the building is being constructed on speculation.

Moldoff said 693 parking spaces have been requested for the site, while only 334 are required.

"That's pretty unusual to have double the amount of parking that is needed," he said.

— Doug Ireland

NH faces population stagnation

By Will Courtney Correspondent | Posted: Sunday, April 12, 2015 12:22 am

For decades, population growth in New Hampshire was given.

With the construction of Interstate 93 beginning in 1961, migrants came in waves from states like Massachusetts, New York and New Jersey seeking the so-called "New Hampshire advantage" — lower taxes, affordable property and a high quality of life.

The state's population more than doubled from 1960 to 2000 to more than 1.2 million, transforming many rural farming towns into suburban enclaves full of single-family homes built on large lots.

In that time, populations in communities along I-93 exploded. Salem grew from a population of 9,210 to 28,112. Windham went from 1,317 to 10,709. Londonderry grew almost 1,000 percent, from 2,457 to 23,326 residents.

These migrants were working age, and came to New Hampshire not just to live, but in many cases to work, fueling the state's economy as well as its population.

But economist Dennis Delay says New Hampshire's recent past looks very different than its future. Since the turn of the century, the flow of newcomers into the Granite State has slowed to a trickle.

Baby boomers, the state's most populous demographic, are leaving the workforce. Meanwhile, statistics show college graduates are seeking out more urban environments rather than starting a family and buying a house. A survey by data analysts at Payscale showed more than three-quarters of recent St. Anselm College graduates left the state.

"In economics, we call this a problem," Delay said.

More jobs, fewer workers

The threat to the state's economy, Delay said, is a shrinking workforce that will deter companies from locating in the state, leaving New Hampshire a step behind its neighbors in the Northeast.

One solution, he believes, will be increasing productivity from the existing workforce through education and skills development.

But, more immediately, he says New Hampshire communities must embrace these changing demographics through the sometimes technical and tedious business of planning boards and

zoning codes by opening the door to rental housing, multi-family units, over-55 communities and higher density areas in otherwise bucolic New England communities.

In Windham, for example, a 2014 survey of 379 residents by the Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission showed just 1 percent of them lived in rental housing, while the rest owned their home. Of those homeowners, 97 percent lived in a single-family home.

Cliff Sennott, executive director of the Rockingham County Planning Commission, said this lack of diverse housing choices can be seen across Southern New Hampshire.

"There's a mismatch between the housing supply with what's needed in the next 20 years," Sennott said. "We have not been building a housing stock that's lending itself to smaller housing sizes, empty-nest portions of the population, or younger couples starting out and needing to find affordable housing.

He agrees with Delay that the state's economic future is at risk.

"Sooner or later, that will put the brakes on economic development, at least in my opinion," Sennott said. "It's a competitive world out there, and if we don't have the housing, the quality of communities, the educated workforce, then other people will get the economic development we could have gotten."

For several years now, Delay, who works for the New Hampshire Center for Public Policy, has sounded an alarm about the potential gap between New Hampshire jobs and people to fill them.

In a presentation he has given around the state, he regularly cites a state Department of Employment study that projects significant job growth through 2022, led by the Rockingham County and the Greater Manchester areas, each with the potential for more than 14 percent more jobs than they had in 2012.

At the same time, he predicts the state's population will only grow 3 percent this decade, and the shifting demographics of the population will mean the number of working age people (age 25 to 64) to fill potential jobs will shrink in every region of the state.

"Many think of this state as a high-growth, very attractive place to live," he said. "A lot of that is still somewhat true, but it's not going to be enough to simply be those things and expect a lot of economic and population growth as a result of those things. Our high growth years are gone and not coming back, in my opinion."

Change is hard

To avoid this gap, Londonderry is undergoing a comprehensive review of its zoning codes to accommodate its vast potential for economic growth. The town projects the potential for more

than 5,000 jobs created by development on Pettengill Road near the Manchester-Boston Regional Airport in the next five to 10 years.

Amended zoning codes have already paved the way for more four developments with more than 700 units of workforce housing either approved or under review.

"The times are changing," Londonderry Planning Board Chairman Art Rugg said. "You try to prepare for it and have the different type of housing being desired. We certainly have a lot of single-family housing, and not everyone wants that today."

But Sennott said he believes for smaller towns in the region that have long embraced their rural nature, meeting the changing demand for housing will be more difficult.

"Towns like Hampstead and Atkinson, because of how they've grown — not having sewer and water and large-lot development — are close to buildout under current zoning codes," he said.

"That's another factor that is going to weigh against growth. There isn't a lot of opportunity, therefore land prices are going to remain very high."

Salem planner Ross Moldoff said he believes his town will be just fine. He credits how Salem was developed decades ago, with a lot of commercial development around Route 28 and zoning that allowed for high-density areas and rental housing, there is still plenty of room to grow.

Salem has about 7,800 single-family homes, 3,200 multi-family units and about 800 manufactured homes. Moldoff cited a 2001 survey the town did when developing its master plan that showed the town still had 2,600 buildable acres.

"A broad range of different priced housing in Salem gives us a bit of a cushion," he said.

If more towns in the region don't make way for an array of housing, it will be New Hampshire's loss, Delay said. He concedes that his numbers are based on existing trends and don't figure in unforeseen variables like fluctuations in the overall economy.

If most factors within the state remain the same, however, he said he feels strongly that the Granite State's economy will suffer for it. But convincing the residents of New Hampshire won't be easy.

"I think there are ways to do it without losing what people sometimes think of as the character or charm of their town," Delay said. "People are generally afraid of making change, even if it's change for the better."

Population stagnation

Populations in local communities exploded for 40 years, but that growth has slowed significantly in the last decade.

Town 1960 2000 2010

Atkinson 1,017 6,178 6,751

Danville 604 4,023 4,387

Derry 6,987 34,021 33,109

Hampstead 1,261 8,297 8,523

Kingston 1,672 5,862 6,025

Londonderry 2,457 23,236 24,129

Newton 1,419 4,287 4,603

Pelham 2,605 10,914 12,897

Salem 9,210 28,112 28,776

Windham 1,317 10,709 13,592

Restaurateur buys 50 acres of The Rock

By Doug Ireland direland@eagletribune.com | Posted: Thursday, April 9, 2015 12:30 am

SALEM — A multi-million-dollar casino complex may never be built at Rockingham Park, but restaurateur and developer Joseph Faro envisions a complex of a different kind.

It could include a hotel, residential units, even restaurants, Faro said Wednesday.

Faro, the owner of Tuscan Kitchen restaurant and Tuscan Market on Main Street, recently finalized the purchase of 50 acres of the 170-acre racetrack site for about \$9.6 million, according to county records.

But Faro, who confirmed he was considering a purchase of the property in October, said he is still contemplating his options and looking at mixed uses for the site.

"I don't have a formal plan yet," he said. "There are so many things that have to happen. ... We're in a holding pattern."

Faro said he is waiting to see if the Legislature passes Senate Bill 113 this session.

If passed, the bill could bring two high-end casinos to the state, including one at Rockingham Park.

While nearly one-third of the Rockingham Park property is in new hands, president and general manager Edward Callahan said Millennium Gaming of Las Vegas continues to hold an option to purchase the remaining 120 acres.

Millennium Gaming has proposed a casino complex at The Rock, but the project depends on the approval of expanded gambling in New Hampshire.

"We're hoping that works," Faro said of the casino proposal. "It's a great piece of property. We're happy to be developing it."



Restaurateur buys 50 acres of The Rock

Staff file photoA deal has been finalized to sell 50 acres of the Rockingham Park property in Salem to restaurateur Joseph Faro.

Faro said he could build a hotel on the site whether or not there's a casino next door. He said he plans to continue expanding Tuscan Village, which now includes the restaurant and market, over the next several years.

"Whatever we come up with, it's going to be a win-win for Salem," he said. "The town of Salem has been great to work with."

Faro and Callahan were among those who testified Tuesday in support of SB 113 before the House Ways and Means Committee.

Approval of casino gambling is expected to create hundreds of jobs and generate millions of dollars in annual revenue for the state and communities, according to advocates.

Opponents say supporters of casino gambling have overestimated the potential benefits, especially projected revenues. They also say casinos would lead to increased crime, gambling addiction and a tarnished state image.

Last year, a similar bill was passed by the Senate, but defeated by a single vote in the House.

Callahan said he believes the Legislature and Gov. Maggie Hassan need to approve expanded gambling as soon as possible to prevent New Hampshire residents from spending their money in other states.

"Hopefully, it moves forward and makes a lot of people happy," he said.

The Rock, owned by Rockingham Venture Inc., drew thousands of spectators for races until live racing ended five years ago.

Callahan said the sale to Faro was finalized after months of negotiations, but would not confirm the purchase price.

"I can neither confirm nor deny the sale price," he said.

The deed shows the property was sold for \$9.6 million, according to the Rockingham County register of deeds. Town records show the entire 170-acre site is assessed at \$54.4 million.

Callahan has said he could not comment on Faro's plans for the property.

"You would have to talk to Joe," he said.

The town Planning Board voted unanimously in November to grant subdivision approval for the property. The 50 acres Faro bought used to be home to horse barns.

The several dozen dilapidated barns, which once housed more than 1,600 racehorses, were razed last fall.

Car dealership expands in Salem

By Doug Ireland direland@eagletribune.com | Posted: Wednesday, April 1, 2015 12:20 am

SALEM — Construction will start soon on a car dealership on Route 28 expected to bring at least 20 new jobs to town.

The Planning Board has approved plans for a 22,000-square-foot building at 93 S. Broadway that will serve as the new home of Salem Nissan, now at 343 Main St. The project also calls for creation of a 10.5-acre conservation area.

"We hope to break ground about May 1 and to move in December," co-owner Daniel Forget said Tuesday. "It will triple our size."

Forget said he will be able to expand his workforce from 30 employees to 50.

The approval came nearly four years after Forget and his business partners, including three of his nine siblings, announced they purchased the former Rockingham Nissan from local businessman Emmett Horgan, who owns several other car dealerships in town.

But neighbors' concerns about potential flooding at the 15-acre site threatened to derail the project.

It will be built on the site of a former gas station that dated back to the 1940s. Nearly 75,000 square feet of pavement remains.

There have been numerous public hearings on the project before the Planning Board and Conservation Commission over the last year. The commission will review the conservation easement again Wednesday night before granting final approval.

Residents have been outspoken, saying the area has been prone to flooding for years.

"I've lived there for 47 years and I have seen it all," Belmont Street resident Linda Mills told the board last fall. "I don't want to see any more flooding in addition to what we already have."



Car dealership expands in Salem

RYAN HUTTON/Staff photoThe Salem Planning Board granted approval for a car dealership at 93 S. Broadway. Residents have been concerned nearly 75,000 square feet of pavement at the site could lead to flooding.

Residents of Belmont and Westchester streets have said they worry about flooding whenever there is a heavy rain, especially in the spring. They recalled the Mother's Day Flood of 2006 that left Salem neighborhoods under several feet of water.

No one spoke out at the Planning Board's recent public hearing, probably resigned to the fact they could not prevent the project from moving forward, planning director Ross Moldoff said.

"The site is not in the floodplain, but we all know it's subject to flooding," Moldoff said.

Forget and project representative George Fredette said porous pavement and installation of a state-of-the-art drainage and floodwater storage system should help alleviate residents' concerns.

But flooding could still be a problem, Fredette said.

"We know the area may have rising water again in the future," he said.

Board member Ronald Belanger asked if the drainage system would be adequate enough to prevent flooding.

"What can the town do if it fails?" he said.

The New Hampshire Wetlands Bureau has approved the filling in of 12,000 square feet on the property, Moldoff said.

Salem Nissan will plant approximately 25 to 30 white pine trees along Belmont Street to serve as a buffer, he said.

Salem officials miffed at state liquor commission

By Doug Ireland direland@eagletribune.com | Posted: Friday, March 27, 2015 1:00 am

SALEM — Town officials are concerned that when the state's largest liquor store opens in the Rockingham Mall plaza in two months, it will exacerbate a traffic nightmare.

But New Hampshire Liquor Commission Chairman Joseph Mollica said Thursday while the new 24,000-square-foot location at 92 Cluff Crossing Road is expected to be a top revenue producer among the state's 78 liquor stores, no major increase in traffic is expected.

"We don't feel it would add any additional traffic that isn't already there," Mollica said.

That's still a problem, according to Salem officials, saying traffic at the shopping plaza off heavily traveled Route 28 is already troublesome, especially during the holidays.

"The traffic there is a nightmare already," Planning Board Chairman Edward DeClercq said. "It's going to be a major issue this holiday season."

The store would be located in the same plaza as Kohl's, Bob's Stores, TJ Maxx, Christmas Tree Shops, Bob's Discount Furniture and Shaw's.

The commission has said an estimated 40,000 motorists are expected to travel to the plaza on a daily basis, a 66 percent increase over the current location. There would be three times as many parking spaces.

Town Manager Keith Hickey agrees the project would contribute to a serious traffic problem, saying the former Off Broadway Shoe location is not suitable for such a large operation.

Salem officials are upset that when the commission announced the project in December, they hadn't been notified.

"The first I heard about it was in the newspaper," DeClercq said.



Salem officials miffed at state liquor commission

The New Hampshire Liquor & Wine Outlet on South Broadway in Salem is expected to close soon and reopen a short distance away at the old Off Broadway Shoes on Cluff Crossing Road, making it the state's largest liquor store.

That was the day after the commission announced the new facility would be double the size of its current store at 417 S. Broadway, where it's stood for approximately half a century.

DeClercq fired off a letter to Mollica, asking the state to submit its plans to the town, but it did not comply. Mollica said traffic concerns should be voiced to the landlord, not the state.

The six-employee store — less than 10,000 square feet — will close the day after the new store opens, which will be shortly after Memorial Day, Mollica said. A few additional full-time employees will be added, he said.

The old store is the fourth-largest revenue generator of the state's liquor and wine stores, generating \$23.6 million in sales in fiscal 2014, Mollica said. The new store is expected to produce at least \$2 million more in annual revenue, he said.

While the state has no obligation to notify communities of its proposed projects, DeClercq and fellow Planning Board member and Rep. Ronald Belanger, R-Salem, said it's just common courtesy. Communities also have no authority over state projects.

Salem planning officials should have been given a presentation on the project and been allowed to make recommendations, which didn't happen, DeClercq and Belanger said.

"It should have come before the town," DeClercq said. "They should have at least had the courtesy to notify us of this."

Belanger approached Mollica in Concord to express his concerns about the project.

DeClercq said school district officials appeared before the Planning Board Tuesday to explain the \$75 million high school renovation project — even though they weren't required to do so.

Interior renovations at the Cluff Crossing Road location, which is being leased from Kimco Realty Corp., began about two weeks ago, Mollica said. The state has offered to sell its former space, assessed at \$1.9 million, to the town, Hickey said.

But Hickey said the town has no use for the property. Selectmen are expected to vote on whether to make an offer for the site in April.

Some local officials, including Belanger, thought the state would renovate the South Broadway location. He agreed the new store would make the traffic situation even more unbearable for residents and businesses in the Cluff Crossing area.

Commission officials have said they want to boost sales by building new stores and renovating older facilities.

Since 2012, work has been completed at 18 stores, including facilities in Hampstead and Plaistow. A store was recently added at the new Londonderry Travel Plaza off Exit 5 of Interstate 93.

Two 20,000-square-foot stores were recently built off Interstate 93 in Hooksett, replacing the two older stores there.

Office, retail complex OK'd in Salem

By Doug Ireland direland@eagletribune.com | Posted: Thursday, March 26, 2015 1:00 am

SALEM — After battling with town boards for years, a developer has been granted approval to convert the former Coca-Cola plant on South Broadway into a retail and office complex.

The Planning Board voted unanimously Tuesday to allow property owner Joseph Scott of Metscott 21 LLC to redevelop the 94-year-old brick building at 19-23 S. Broadway.

It was once home to one of the nation's first Coca-Cola plants, closing more than a decade ago.

Scott's past proposals received intense scrutiny from town land-use boards, with some board members concerned the property's historical integrity would be destroyed.

Shopping plazas and a waste-to-energy plant have been proposed, but never built.

The latest plan calls for 30,000 square feet of retail space, 18,000 square feet of office space and 18,000 square feet of warehouse space.

Board members and town planning director Ross Moldoff praised the proposal. They said the project would be a significant upgrade over past proposals and an aging bottling plant that had fallen into disrepair.

"Obviously, it's a big improvement over what was there previously," Moldoff said.

But the board's concerns about increased traffic along heavily traveled South Broadway threatened to derail the project.

A recommendation that left-turn lanes be added to the site's two driveways would be cost prohibitive and require the acquisition of additional land, project representative Mark Gross said.

South Broadway would have to be expanded to five lanes, which would be difficult, according to Steven Pernaw, the town's traffic consultant.



Office, retail complex OK'd in Salem

RYAN HUTTON/Staff photo A major retail and office complex has been approved at the site of the former Coca-Cola plant at 19-23 S. Broadway in Salem.

Concerns that an abutter, New Hampshire Employment Security, had not received sufficient notice of the public hearing also nearly further delayed the project Tuesday.

"I don't support approving this tonight because of an abutter issue," Chairman Edward DeClercq said.

NHES attorney Karen Levchuk told the board an increase in traffic from the project and its two driveways would present safety hazards.

"We don't want to hold up the project, we don't want to hurt the developer," Levchuk said, "but we have safety concerns."

To alleviate the concerns and move forward with the project, Metscott agreed to move one of its driveways and negotiate a possible consolidation of driveways with NHES.

Public hearings on the project were canceled this winter because of inclement weather, making it difficult to attract tenants, Gross said. Scott did not attend the hearing Tuesday and could not be reached for comment Wednesday.

"It is imperative that they have tenants lined up for this building," Gross said. "They cannot sign up tenants until there is approval."

Scott received approval to have a car dealership at the site last year, but recently abandoned that plan when he couldn't find a tenant. He has not disclosed how many tenants would occupy the property.

He has said in the nine years he's sought approval at the site, he's paid at least \$600,000 to \$700,000 in property taxes alone.

Scott has also said he's become frustrated dealing with the town and prospective suitors for the property have been concerned Salem's regulations are too strict.

Salem High project raises traffic concerns

By Doug Ireland direland@eagletribune.com | Posted: Thursday, March 26, 2015 12:00 am

SALEM — Some town officials are concerned a proposal to put the new main entrance to Salem High School directly across from Town Hall could create serious traffic and safety problems.

The town's Planning Board got its first look at plans for the three-year, \$75 million high school renovation project Tuesday night.

Under state law, the board can only advise school officials on the project since it's exempt from town approval, planning director Ross Moldoff said.

Residents approved the work at the polls last year. Construction on the 365,000-square-foot building begins April 13 and should wrap up in fall 2018.

Board members questioned the school district's decision to place the main entrance and exit right across from Town Hall, exacerbating what they said already is a troublesome traffic situation at the beginning and end of the day.

"Traffic congestion was an issue we were concerned about and still are," Moldoff said

It's especially a problem in the afternoon when buses and parents are picking up students and people are going to and from Town Hall, he said.

Although it's only for a 15-minute period in the afternoon, "It's a major issue for that short period of time," Moldoff said.

Board members agreed, including Ronald Belanger and Jane Lang.

Belanger said afternoon traffic is already a nightmare in that area.

"I think the plan looks great, but I would like to see you address that," Belanger said. "It's bumper to bumper all along Main Street."

Lang also expressed concern that a difficult traffic situation would become worse.



Salem High project raises traffic concerns

RYAN HUTTON/Staff photo
Traffic backs up in front of Salem Town Hall as cars turn into Salem High School on Wednesday afternoon. Some town officials are concerned about plans to put the new school entrance directly across from Town Hall.

"I don't see how you can fix that traffic jam," Lang said.

But school officials and Town Manager Keith Hickey said Wednesday they don't expect a substantial rise in traffic in the congested area.

The combined entrance and exit would be near an existing exit across from Town Hall, Superintendent Michael Delahanty said. There would be four entrances and exits along Geremonty Drive compared to the six there now, he said.

"My opinion is it's not going to increase the traffic congestion, but it's not going to diminish it either," Delahanty said.

The traffic is especially bad between 7:15 and 7:25 a.m. and 2:10 and 2:20 p.m., he said.

Delahanty and project engineer David Jordan of MHF Design Consultants said a reconfiguration of the property would increase the number of vehicles that could drive up to the school without compromising safety.

Seventy to 80 vehicles would be able to safely line up outside the school, Jordan said, while there's room for only about 50 now.

There are no easy solutions to the traffic congestion along Geremonty Drive, including moving the proposed main entrance, according to Delahanty and School Board member Bernard Campbell.

Hickey said the town will work with district officials to address the matter.

"I understand the concerns," he said.

Salem police Lt. Joel Dolan said his department would also work with town and school officials to remedy the situation as best as possible.

"We're going to try to resolve it before it becomes a safety issue," Dolan said.

Planning Board member Linda Harvey said one of her major concerns about the project is protection of the sensitive wetlands near the school. They have already been contaminated by road salt, she said.

"This year, we really saw the wetland go downhill," Harvey said.

Work at the school begins April 6 with the installation of construction and silt fencing, Delahanty said.

Some utilities will be relocated the following week and a small part of the Career Technical Education Center will be demolished during spring vacation to make way for an access road behind the school, he said.

Much of the major construction will not begin until this summer to minimize the disruption of classes.

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Proposed car dealership in Salem addresses flood issues, gets permits

By Adam Swift

Union Leader Correspondent

SALEM — A new Nissan auto dealership building that has been in the works at 93 South Broadway for nearly a year now looks to have the final approvals it needs to move forward.

After clearing up some wetlands matters before the Conservation Commission, the Planning Board last week granted a conditional use permit for a 22,000-square-foot building on the 15-acre site. The project will also include 73,000-square-feet of pavement for parking and vehicle display.

Nissan of Salem is currently located on Main Street.

Project Engineer George Fredette said the work on developing the site goes back to last May. The

project was before the Conservation Commission four times in the fall of 2014 as the commission and engineers looked to hammer out wetlands mitigation and buffer issues.

The Conservation Commission initially denied a conditional-use permit for the project in December because of those wetlands issues, but after a further reworking of the plan, the commission reconsidered its vote and approved the permit.

"The major change to the plan is a dedicated conservation easement of 10.5 acres on the land," said Town Planning Director Ross Moldoff, adding that nearly two-thirds of the total parcel will remain untouched under the easement. "The major issue was wetlands and flooding."

Moldoff said that although the site is not in a flood plain, it is prone to flooding and that the developer did provide additional flood mitigation measures on the property.

The project also meets some of the aims of the town's Master Plan, including improving the architectural design of buildings and encouraging the redevelopment of industrial buildings.

Fredette said the project includes the reconstruction of the existing parking lot on the site.

While some Planning Board members asked if the construction would lead to an increase in flooding, Moldoff said the town's outside engineering review approved of the drainage plan.

"The site as proposed should not cause additional flooding problems to the area because of the loss of flood storage or increased runoff from the site," said Moldoff, reading from a report by the Rockingham County Conservation District.

The Planning Board unanimously granted the conditional use permit for Nissan of Salem.

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Salem Sears leases space to Dick's - Eagle-Tribune: New Hampshire

Salem Sears leases space to Dick's

By Doug Ireland direland@eagletribune.com | **Posted: Saturday, February 21, 2015 12:20 am**

SALEM, N.H. — A big change is underway at The Mall at Rockingham Park.

Sears, one of four anchor tenants, is vacating most of its space on the second floor to make way for Dick's Sporting Goods.

The renovation of space for Dick's has begun at the 152-store mall, which received a \$6 million overhaul last year.

Sears will continue to occupy a small portion of the second floor and its entire first-floor space, while leasing its former quarters to Dick's, according to Sears corporate spokesman Christopher Brathwaite.

Dick's will utilize about 79,000 square feet of Sears' 182,000 square feet. Sears will use part of the second floor for stock, Brathwaite said.

It's all part of a partnership that's becoming more common across the nation, especially at Sears locations, where one big-box store rents some its space to another big-box store.

The chain has struggled financially in recent years, leading to layoffs, the reduction of inventory and other cost-cutting moves.

Although Sears is downsizing its Salem store, Brathwaite said, there are no plans to move out of the mall.

That's even though the retail giant announced last year it would close 130 stores.

"We are going to have a significant presence there still," Brathwaite said. "It's a great store for us."

The auto center will remain open as well.

Sears has not announced any closures for 2015, Brathwaite said. Its parent company, Sears Holding Corp., operates 1,900 Sears and Kmart stores.

Brathwaite said Sears leasing of space to other retailers, such as Primark and Whole Foods, is part of a new retail strategy that's proving to be successful.

It allows Sears to receive increased revenue while maximizing use of space, Brathwaite said. Sears didn't need all of the space it had available at the mall, he said.

"We have done a significant amount of this around the country," he said.

He did not know how many employees would be affected by the move.

Mall spokeswoman Mary Zanol declined to comment on the move, referring questions to Brathwaite.

Dick's representatives could not be reached Friday for comment.

Dick's representatives went before the town's Planning Board in November and were granted approval for three exterior signs, according to town planning director Ross Moldoff.

Now, Dick's only needs an occupancy permit, he said. A building permit was already granted and no other Planning Board approvals are needed.

Dick's has not notified the town when it plans to open, Moldoff said.

Material from The Associated Press was used in this report.

Salem board pleased with Coke plant proposal

By Doug Ireland direland@eagletribune.com | Posted: Thursday, February 12, 2015 12:17 am

SALEM — New stores and offices may soon open at the former Coca-Cola plant on South Broadway.

Planning Board members said they are pleased with a proposal presented Tuesday to redevelop the 94-year-old brick building, once home to one of the nation's first Coca-Cola plants.

The plan calls for 30,000 square feet of retail space, 18,000 square feet of office space and 18,000 square feet of warehouse space, Moldoff said.

But board members must still review a traffic study for the project before they can vote on the proposal, according to town planning director Ross Moldoff.

Whether vehicles can turn safely into and out of businesses along heavily traveled South Broadway is always a concern, Moldoff said Wednesday.

"That's been the issue and is probably always the issue for any project in the Depot area because it's so congested," he said.

Board members agreed the proposal by owner Joseph Scott would be an ideal solution for a property mired in controversy since the bottling plant closed more than a decade ago.

Town officials have been concerned in the past that any redevelopment project would destroy the building's historic character.

So, Planning Board members were happy there would be no major changes to the exterior.

"I really appreciate the fact the brick structure was preserved," member Linda Harvey told Scott. "Thank you."

Planning Board member Jane Lang was also impressed.



Salem board pleased with Coke plant proposal

Salem Planning Board members are generally pleased with a proposal to establish retail, office and warehouse space at the former Coca-Cola plant on South Broadway in Salem. But the board must still review a traffic study for the project.

"It looks amazing," she said. "It's nice to see it's been cleaned up."

But Lang said she was disappointed to hear none of the original Coca-Cola equipment remained in the building.

"Everything was stripped," Scott said.

Board members said they were impressed with improvements Scott made to the building in the last year, including paving. A section of the building was removed during the renovations.

Scott recently abandoned plans to lease the building for a car dealership when he had trouble finding a tenant after finally winning approval from the town. Scott has not said how many businesses would occupy the building, but did say he has one potential tenant.

Board member Ronald Belanger, who was concerned about the dealership plan, endorsed the retail and office project.

"I wasn't too happy about it, but I'm happy to see this and how it's coming along," Belanger said. "I think you are doing a great job in how it's coming so far."

Other proposals presented to the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Adjustment over the years have encountered opposition.

"The town didn't want them," Scott said.

Shopping plazas and a waste-to-energy plant have been proposed for the 6.7-acre site, but never built.

"I have been working very hard after nine and a half years to get this occupied," Scott told the board. "I'm just trying to get this done for all of us."

In that time, Scott said, he paid \$600,000 to \$700,000 in property taxes.

He has said he's become frustrated dealing with the town and that prospective suitors for the property have been concerned that Salem's land-use regulations are too stringent.

But board members told Scott they are willing to work him on a project that would benefit the community.

"You have done a wonderful job on the building," Chairman Edward DeClercq said. "It's a great looking project."

Retail, office space proposed at Salem Coke plant

By Doug Ireland direland@eagletribune.com | Posted: Monday, February 9, 2015 1:10 am

SALEM, N.H. — Plans to establish a car dealership at the former Coca-Cola plant on South Broadway have been scrapped in favor of a retail and office complex.

The Planning Board will take its first look Tuesday at a proposal to convert the nearly century-old brick building at 19-23 S. Broadway into a modern facility, according to town planning director Ross Moldoff.

The 6.7-acre site was home to one of the first Coca-Cola bottling plants in the country from 1921 until the 66,000-square-foot building closed about a decade ago. The building has been vacant for about nine years.

The proposal calls for 30,000 square feet of retail space, 18,000 square feet of office space and 18,000 square feet of warehouse space, Moldoff said.

Owner Joseph Scott has not indicated to the town how many businesses would operate at the site, he said.

The application from Scott and his company, Metscott 21 LLC, also proposes changes in parking and landscaping improvements, Moldoff said.

Last fall, Scott said he would consider new uses for the building after having trouble leasing the building as a dealership.

Potential uses included manufacturing in addition to retail and warehouse space, Scott said. A bakery was among businesses interested in the property, he said.

He declined to comment on the latest proposal Friday.

Scott has said he's become frustrated dealing with town boards since acquiring the property a decade ago.



Retail, office space proposed at Salem Coke plant

The owner of the former Coca-Cola plant on South Broadway in Salem has abandoned plans to lease or sell it to a car dealership and proposes retail and office space in the nearly century-old building.

Shopping plazas and a waste-to-energy plant have been proposed for the site, but never built. Scott said earlier potential suitors believe town regulations and land-use board members are too restrictive.

Scott said in November he hadn't ruled out the possibility of a dealership still moving to the site — though it appeared unlikely.

But the same night the Planning Board holds a public hearing on the revised site plan, it's been asked to consider requests for two dealerships down the street, Moldoff said.

F&B Salem Realty proposes a 22,000-square-foot dealership at the site of a former gas station at 93 S. Broadway.

The Zoning Board of Adjustment granted approval in November for the sale of new and used vehicles at the site.

Residents have opposed the plan, saying the proposed dealership would lead to more flooding in their neighborhood off Route 28.

Moldoff said Friday that F&B still needs a waiver from the Conservation Commission because the project would be too close to wetlands. A waiver is needed before the Planning Board can consider granting a conditional use permit, he said.

The other proposal to be heard by the board at the meeting at 7 p.m. calls for the renovation of the 33,000-square-foot Salem Ford/Hyundai building at 470 S. Broadway.

Steve Patterson, legal counsel for owner Key Auto Group, said his client wants to replace a building that's stood at the 3-acre site for more than 40 years. The footprint wouldn't change, he said.

"We are going to substantially renovate it," he said. "We think this would better serve our customers."

Key Auto Group, which operates dealerships and businesses across Southern New Hampshire, opened Key Collision Center of Salem at 12 Hampshire Road last year, Patterson said.

Charity gaming encounters obstacles in Salem

By Doug Ireland direland@eagletribune.com | Posted: Monday, January 12, 2015 12:30 am

SALEM, N.H. — A gaming organization's plan to open a 250-seat bingo hall on Industrial Way just wasn't in the cards.

Lucky 13 Bingo may be looking for yet another new home after proposing to move its charitable gaming operation out of Rockingham Park and encountering obstacles.

The town's Zoning Board of Adjustment rejected a request for a variance that would have allowed the bingo hall to operate in a business park at 5 Industrial Way. A variance was required because gaming operations are not allowed in the industrial district.

Some board members said they didn't think the 11,000-square-foot bingo hall would be an appropriate use for the neighborhood when they voted, 3-2, to reject the proposal last week.

They were especially concerned about parking and potential traffic at the site.

"I'm nervous about this kind of use and whether it could be detrimental to surrounding properties," ZBA member Bernard Campbell said. "I just don't think it would be a good fit."

If approved by the town and licensed by the state, it would have been only the 16th bingo hall in the state, according to Sudhir Naik, deputy director of the New Hampshire Racing and Charitable Gaming Commission.

The gaming operation would have occupied 11,000 square feet in a two-story industrial building with several other tenants, including Planet Fitness and Rockingham Christian Church, project engineer Kurt Meisner said.

The bingo hall would have operated seven days a week from 5 to 10 p.m. without disrupting the neighborhood, businesses or other organizations, Meisner said.

Church representative James Torisi said while Rockingham Christian is not opposed to the proposal, "we're not thrilled with it."



Bingo blocked

The Salem Zoning Board of Adjustment rejected plans for a bingo hall at 5 Industrial Way. The bingo hall would have been only the 16th in the state.

Torisi said they were worried about safety.

"I am concerned about parking," he said. "We are concerned about the traffic."

The church hosts homeless families as part of a network of shelters run by Family Promise of Greater Rockingham County, Torisi said.

Rockingham Christian also hosts various activities at night attended by schoolchildren, he said.

The defeat comes only months after the Planning Board approved the group's plans for a bingo hall on Garabedian Drive. But a deal with the landlord fell through, Lucky 13 representative Christina Lebel said.

Lebel said the zoning board's decision will be appealed.

"We are going to fight it," she said.

Lucky 13 informed Rockingham Park last summer it was looking for another location, especially because of the uncertainty facing the former racetrack, according to park president and general manager Edward Callahan.

The park's revenue has plummeted after live racing ended at the park several years ago and there's concern it could close.

Millennium Gaming of Las Vegas has proposed opening a casino at the site, but proposals to legalize expanded gambling in the state have failed. Lawmakers will consider new casino legislation this year.

Callahan is negotiating with local restaurateur Joseph Faro, who wants to buy 50 acres — or one-third — of the site. Faro has not disclosed his plans for the property.

Callahan said two weeks ago that charitable bingo will continue at the park, where the games have been held since 1987.

Chairman Gary Azarian told fellow zoning board members that charitable gaming is an important asset to Salem.

"This type of venue feeds most civic organizations in town with monies to help the less fortunate," he said.

The Republican state representative is among the lawmakers pushing for approval of expanded gaming legislation and establishment of a casino at Rockingham Park.

Proponents say a casino would keep the facility open, generating millions of dollars in annual revenue for the state and community, and creating hundreds of much-needed jobs. Charitable gaming could also continue there, Azarian said.

"We're all hoping at some point Rockingham Park would be developed and those organizations will move back," he said.

But Azarian joined Campbell and Michael Smith in opposing the Industrial Way proposal because of parking, traffic and other issues that make the bingo hall incompatible for the site.

Robert Uttley and Arthur Nobrega voted in favor of the request, saying it was reasonable and would not overburden the neighborhood.

"You have to have bingo somewhere if they are moving out of Rockingham Park," Uttley said.

preview today in New Hampshire Weekend.

business

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We take a look at how to invest in the stock market in 2015 with investors factoring in falling oil prices and an improving economy. Sunday's business

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Keep a tighter grip on your money by paying less for everyday items. That's one way to stretch the food budget and still provide great meals. Find more than \$188 in coupon savings this weekend in the New Hampshire Sunday News, New Hampshire's only statewide Sunday newspaper.

Matt, before you're caught

MATT, WINTER HAS NOW set in here in Manchester. You lived here long enough to know the routine. People stay indoors. We scurry from our house to car to work and back again. We go to bed early. We hibernate.

Yet, even in our long winter's night sleep, we can't forget the nightmare of last spring. The most tangible memory is the house of your parents, Bob and Connie Dion. The Mooresville Road house — the house you grew up in — has become a cold, empty monument to your strangled parents.

The front is wrapped in



City Matters

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a blue tarp, an odd sort of final curtain that marks the dramatic end to their otherwise ordinary lives. A few No Trespassing signs are on

the property. Walk up the driveway, and the charred portions of the house let out the smell of an old campfire.

"The Dions, they were wonderful people," your former neighbor, Pete Samon, said this week. You remember him. He moved to Mooresville Road the same year as your parents. He saw you grow up.

"Every time I walk by there, I don't believe it. To see a burned out building covered by a blue tarp is pretty sad," Samon said.

Slowly, memories of Bob and Connie will disappear

► See City Matters, Page B3

Zoners: No variance for bingo hall

◆ **Salem:** Lucky 13 Bingo still without a permanent home.

By ADAM SWIFT
Union Leader Correspondent

SALEM — Lucky 13 Bingo is still without a permanent home, thanks to Tuesday night's zoning board of adjustment vote against a variance that would have let the group open a 250-seat bingo hall in an industrial building at 5 Industrial Way.

The ZBA voted 3-2 against allowing the variance, with Chairman Gary Azarian casting the deciding vote.

Although Azarian made some arguments during the hearing as to why the board might want to consider allowing the bingo hall in the industrial zone, he said he agreed with board members Bernard Campbell and Michael Smith.

Campbell and Smith argued against the request for the variance allowing the bingo hall in the industrial zone because there were other uses that could be allowed in the building.

"I'm struggling with the spirit of the ordinance," said Campbell. "Is this the most appropriate use for that area (and) is this the highest and best use of this property in this zone?"

Several ZBA members also raised concerns about traffic and parking on the property, but Azarian noted that those issues fell under the jurisdiction of the planning board.

Lucky 13 Bingo formerly held charitable bingo games at Rockingham Park.

Last year, the organization received planning board approval to open a bingo hall on Garabedian Drive, but the lease fell through for that location.

Project engineer Kurt Meisner said the proposal for Industrial Way called for a 250-seat bingo hall in a portion of the building with no changes to the structure except for a handicap accessible ramp. Plans call for the bingo hall to be open seven days a week from 5 to 10 p.m., with portions of the proceeds from the games going to local charitable organizations.

ZBA member Uttley supported the variance, saying he believed the proposed location would be a good spot for a bingo hall, provided the parking issues were addressed.

Azarian said he thought the use might be a good fit for the Industrial Way property, but ultimately said he agreed with Campbell and Smith's arguments that the bingo hall was not the best use for the industrial zone.

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community mental organization, the vision and planned of the residential was recently approved. CLM's board of directors. "After exploring options, we have the difficult decision to close our community center in Derry," Town in the statement. "The residents and their families have been informed of the planned program and have been reassured that we have initiated the process of an appropriate alternative housing placement for each individual resident."

Salem se wants sta

◆ **Miranda right:** judge will decide whether statements made by Daniel Perez can be against him.

By JAMES A. KIMB
Union Leader Correspondent

BRENTWOOD — A Massachusetts man accused of molesting a 10-year-old girl at a Salem

Man in sta head injur

NASHUA — A man in stable condition with a serious head injury after a fall during an altercation this past weekend.

Charles O'Neill, 40, of Railroad Square, has been arrested and charged with a felony count of second-degree assault in connection with Sunday's altercation outside of his residence.

Police say that O'Neill allegedly pushed the victim from behind, causing him to fall and sustain a "serious head injury," according to a release.